The Sound of Wedding Bells

— OR —

Won After Great Perseverance!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

He lies for a moment silent, then he rouses and looks at her.

"Here still, Dulcie!" he says. "Has he not taken you away? This is no place for you, my darling! Ah, I forgot! the telegram! Have you sent it yet?"

"No," she says, calmly.

"No! It will be too late! I should like it to be sent before I—read it to me, Dulcie."

She raises her head.

"Must I?" she murmurs, in a strange voice.

"Yes," he says. "There must be no mistake. Read it."

She does not move, but she takes up the form beside her, and in a low, clear voice that does not tremble, she reads:

"Go."

Only that one word.

His eyes open and his hand closes on hers.

"Go!" he murmurs. "Dulcie, that is not right!"

"It is the only word I shall send," she says, and her voice quivers. "It is the only word possible."

"Oh, my darling," he murmurs. "Oh, pitiful heart! It is pity—not love!"

"Pity! Is it?" she says, and an ineffable smile shines in her eyes. "No, my darling, it is not pity—it is love!" and she creeps nearer to him and lays her lips on his. "It is love! Archie, Archie, though you may have doubted, you will not doubt now! It is love! I love you! Can you hear me? I love you! Oh, my darling, you will not send me from you? Let all else go, all the world, but let me stay, for—I—love—you——"

He raises himself and looks at her long and steadily; then a strange light flashes in his eyes, and a flush comes into the white face.

"Is it true? Am I dreaming? Oh, Dulcie, Dulcie!"

"It is true!" she murmurs. "It is true! I love you, my own darling! See!" and with a slow caressing gesture she takes his head upon her bosom, and putting her lips to his, kisses him.

So they remain—one in heart at last—until the doctor comes forward with a warning voice.

She does not move, but raises her eyes almost defiantly with a wild look.

"I will not go," she breathes, almos tfaintly.

"Hush! hush!" he says, and he bends over the white face anxiously for a moment.

Then he looks up and there is an eager light in his eyes, a new look on his face.

"No, no," he says, "you may stay. Thank Heaven, he is asleep!"

"Then——" her eyes ask the question her lips cannot frame.

"He will live? Yes, please Heaven!" he says, reverently. "Lay him down gently. Poor fellow, it has been a narrow escape—— Ah!" for suddenly she slips down, still holding the white, powerless hand, against which her face is pressed.

The doctor comes forward to raise her, thinking that she has fainted, but she shakes her head.

"No, no, do not touch me. He may wake, and when he does he shall find me here."

And so she remains through the long night, his hand clasped in hers, her heart beating against his.

And when he wakes at last, it is to the knowledge that the past has vanished; wakes to a future made bright by a love without spot or shadow—his, and his alone.

* * * * *

Is there any need to follow out this little comedy, to trace to the end the wayward path of Dulcie's life?

The sound of wedding bells is in the air; a marriage morn dawns brightly o'er the scene, and as the voice from the altar puts the question—

"Wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband?" met by the low but firmly whispered reply, "I will," the curtain may fittingly descend.

THE END.

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Deceived

AND

Disowned

BUT

True as Steel!

"Yes, indeed!" said Olive. "I think I envy you that. Perhaps you regret losing your freedom, even for this hour."

"No, no, indeed," exclaimed Reuben. "I did not mean that—I shall only be too happy to wait on you, and be your servant."

"My master, you mean," said Olive, with a laugh, as they rode into the courtyard of the Hall. Then, as Reuben helped her to dismount, she asked: "Will you come to-morrow?"

"Yes, indeed, miss," he replied eagerly. "At the same time?"

She inclined her head, then ran lightly up the broad steps and through the great hall, happy as a bird. She pushed open the door of the dining-room, but the song died on her lips when she saw the room was not empty. At the table sat her father and two gentlemen; the one was about Sir Edwin's age, the other was evidently his son. At her entry they rose, and Sir Edwin came forward.

"Oh, Olive, my dear, this is Mr. John Verner, this is my only child, Olive."

John Verner, but very little altered since the night on which Wynter had threatened his life, came forward and took the hand Olive extended to him.

"And this," continued her father, turning to the younger man, a rather pale young fellow, with reddish hair, and a face that would have been thoroughly vicious but for its signs of weakness, "this is Mr. Morgan Verner, Mr. Verner's son."

Olive bowed distantly, not very favorably impressed by either of the visitors.

The young man made a casual remark, by way of opening a conversation, and, as he did so, a strange, unaccountable sensation thrilled her through and through. Was it a sort of premonition that in some way or other this young man was destined to be very closely linked with her future life?

CHAPTER II.

SOWING THE SEEDS.

THE Grange, which stood on a hill about twelve miles from Bingleigh Hall, had been unoccupied for years—its owner, Mr. John Verner, and his son Morgan, had been away on the Continent ever since the latter had left school—and people had almost forgotten that any owner was in existence when father and son returned. John Verner himself was but little changed; he had given out that his nephew had died in France, and had managed to become possessed of the Wrenstead property. His son, Morgan, had developed into a vain, selfish youth, willing to sacrifice anything and any one to his own desires.

When the father and son returned, their old servant and steward, Griley, became their confidential adviser; and a more thoroughpaced old scoundrel never existed. Strangely enough, he was devoted to his master and his master's son, and absolutely unscrupulous as to the means by which he benefited them, grinding every penny he could from the tenants, great and small; so it was little wonder that, on the arrival of the Verners, there were no rejoicings.

The Grange itself was in a sad state of repair; little money was spent on it, every penny going straight into the hands of Mr. Verner, and thence to the gaming tables—for John Verner was a gambler, and spared nothing to gratify his passion. Morgan inherited his father's tastes, and was a reckless spendthrift; between them they had wasted, during their travels from one gay city to another, enough money to have rebuilt the Grange twice over.

As a matter of fact, the object of John Verner's visit to Bingleigh Hall was to borrow money. He had brought a letter of introduction from Mr. Worsley, who was his legal adviser, as well as Sir Edwin's, and he was just about to lead up to his own personal needs when Olive entered. At the sight of her, he had let the matter drop, and kept the conversation on the general topics of the crops and birds.

Meanwhile, Morgan endeavored to impress Olive favorably. He found this rather difficult, for he could only talk of the pleasures of the Continent, all of which were as a sealed book to Olive, who had passed her innocent life in Bingleigh Hall, with the exception of a few quiet years spent with the good sisters at the convent school of St. Ninian's, at Seacombe.

"What do you do with your time?" asked Morgan, ogling her. "'Pon my word, I'm curious!" He gave what he considered a witty laugh.

"I have my books, and my people to look after," responded Olive, gravely; "and I like needlework and riding."

"Ah," said Morgan, with a satisfied twirl of his mustache, "perhaps you will show me some of the beauties of the neighborhood—I'm awfully fond of riding, doncher know."

At this moment his father came up.

"Sir Edwin has been kind enough to ask us to dinner to-morrow, Morgan."

"Oh, delighted, I'm sure," rejoined Morgan, with another ogling smile. "Delighted!"

"Then we'll say seven o'clock," said Sir Edwin, as he rang the bell for his guests' carriage.

"When I hope to renew my acquaintance with Miss Seymour," returned Mr. Verner, with a bow and a smile to Olive, as he shook hands with her.

Once in the carriage, Mr. Verner's face grew hard and calculating, and his eyes, as they dwelt on the fine old house, lighted up with avaricious longing.

"It's a fine place," he muttered. "Seymour is a rich man, and the girl will have every penny." Then he turned to his son irritably. "Morgan, why didn't you make yourself pleasant to that girl? I'll swear I saw her laughing at you, with your mincing ways, and that piece of glass stuck in your eye."

His son reddened with rage.

"Laughed, did she? I'll teach her to laugh at me!"

"Better teach her to marry you!" retorted his father. "She's the old man's only child, and heiress to Bingleigh Hall, mark that! Besides, she has a fortune of her own, settled on her by her mother!"

They sat in silence after this remark—both dwelling on the riches they had left behind them—till they turned in at the dilapidated gateway of their own ill-kept park.

As they entered the hall of the Grange, old Griley appeared, squinting, and rubbing his hands, as usual. Mr. Verner followed him into a small room called, by courtesy, the study, though the present owner of the Grange and his son devoted little time to any reading other than the betting news, and flung himself into a chair.

"Well," said Griley, "did you get the money?"

"No," retorted his master; "I didn't even ask for it, Griley."

The old man muttered under his breath, and John Verner smiled grimly.

"Isn't Seymour rich, then?" inquired the steward.

"Oh, yes, he's rich enough," was the reply; "but there's a daughter—and it goes to her, Griley."

"Ah!" breathed Griley, rubbing his hands and looking as a spider might when he contemplates trapping some helpless fly. "Ah! a nice girl, eh?"

Mr. Verner nodded significantly.

"A young lady to fall in love with, eh?" chuckled the old man, "make a nice daughter-in-law, eh, Mr. John?"

"Is there any chance of that, do you think?" said Mr. Verner, bending forward.

"Why not?" returned Griley, with a grin. "What young gel wouldn't fall in love with Mr. Morgan; isn't he handsome enough?" He gave another hideous chuckle.

Mr. Verner looked at him doubtfully, as he rose from his chair.

(To be Continued.)

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Mr. A. S. Mace, J.P., endorses the above statement and says: "This is to certify that I am personally acquainted with Charles R. Tait, and believe his statement in every way to be true and correct."

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