



## WHEN LOVE Came Too Late.

CHAPTER III.

Bertie shook his head.

"And—and you mean to remain here? What will you do with yourself? Do you intend to live in complete seclusion—to make no friends?"

Faradeane was silent for a moment.

"I shall remain here until chance puts my pursuers on my track," he replied. "What am I going to do?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "That's rather a difficult question to answer, Cherub. I find time hang rather heavily on my hands; but I read a great deal, and I write. You know I always had a knack of scribbling. And I have indulged myself in a horse; and he and I—it is a new one—are very good friends already. As to friends of the human kind, barring yourself, Cherub, I must do without them. If you like to take pity on the recluse, and run in now and again, well and good; but no one else."

"Great Heaven!" muttered Bertie; "and you—you who were so popular, such a favorite with us all! I—Forgive me, Faradeane; but while I have been listening, a possible idea has struck me."

The other laughed.

"Yes, I know what you mean. You have almost doubted my sanity; have felt inclined to set me down as mad." He put his hands on Bertie's shoulders, and looked down at him with an expression which haunted the light-hearted Cherub for many a day. "Bertie, I wish I were mad!" There was a moment's pause. "Yes, I wish I could persuade myself that it was a horrible dream, and wake up—"

He stretched out his arms, and drew a long breath, then let them fall to his side and turned away.

Bertie rose and went to the window. It is not "the thing" to exhibit emotion, even on behalf of one's dear friend; but there was a suspicious moisture in Bertie's blue eyes.

He turned to him after a moment or two.

"One question more, Faradeane, about your affairs. They must give you a great deal of trouble, anxiety. Can I do nothing to help you respectfully?"

Faradeane shook his head.

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"No, thanks, Cherub. Just before I fled I placed all of my business affairs in the hands of Elamere, my solicitor. He does everything; acts as my other self, in fact, under a power of attorney, as they call it. He is the only man who knows my whereabouts, or my present name, excepting yourself, and I can trust you both, thank Heaven. I have given out that I am a woman hater—there is more truth in that, by the way," he put in grimly. "than you think; and my man has instructions to allow no petticoat to enter the premises. I dare say the simple folks down here will be rather curious; but they will get over it in time. At present I rather think they imagine that I am a little mad, and give me a wide berth. The dog, too, is supposed to be dangerous—he is as quiet and gentle as a lamb, poor old fellow!—and so I fancy I shall be left alone. And now that's enough, and more than enough about myself. Let us talk about a far more interesting subject—you; where are you staying—what are you doing?"

"I am staying with my father," said Bertie. "You have never met him?"

"No, I am glad to say," said Faradeane, grimly. "I should not like him to know me as I was—and as I am." Was that your sister with whom I saw you this morning?" he asked.

"Her abruptly."

A beautiful rose tint suffused Bertie's face.

"No, no!" he replied. "That was Miss Vanley."

Faradeane nodded.

"The daughter of the squire here? I have heard of him through my man."

"Yes," said Bertie; "Olivia. Didn't—didn't you think she was very beautiful, Faradeane?"

Faradeane turned to the fireplace to knock his pipe out, and nodded.

"Yes," he said, slowly.

"I think she is lovely!" said Bertie, in a low voice. "Olivia was always beautiful; but now—I hadn't seen her for two years," he went on, "and—"

and she startled me. She has grown into a woman. I wish you knew her, old fellow. She is as good as she is beautiful. She is just the girl you would approve of, I know. You always said that women were stupid; you wouldn't say it of Olivia. Not that I mean that she's clever in the way of knowing all the things women go in for now; no, not clever in that way; but— Oh, I can't describe her! You must know her to understand what she is like."

The other man watched, with a smile, the handsome face, as it grew rapt and ecstatic.

"You have described her very well, Cherub," he said, quietly. "To know her is to love her, and to love her is a liberal education," he quoted.

Bertie's face flushed.

"That's just it!" he exclaimed. "You always put things so well, Cly—I beg your pardon, I mean Faradeane!" he stammered.

"Be careful, Bertie," said the other, gravely. "Try and get used to my name. A slip at an unwary moment and I am—he shrugged his shoulders—"ruined. Yes, Miss Vanley is something more than lovely. It is a face that carries goodness in its eyes." You ought to be very happy, Cherub."

Bertie grew scarlet as a poppy.

"No, no," he said, hurriedly. "You—you have quite misunderstood. I—I— There is nothing between us—no engagement, I mean. I—I don't think, I've no reason to think that she cares— Why, don't you see, dear old fellow, that I'm not worthy to—to— Oh, no!"

"No!" said Faradeane. "I thought— Well, you are still happy in loving her," he added. "Yes, though you never have an iota of hope, though you may never dare to tell her of your love, though your lips may never touch her hands, you are still happy in loving so sweet, so good a woman."

His voice had grown very earnest, and there was a subtle ring of pain in it that found an echo in Bertie's heart. He hung his head.

"I know what you mean," he said, in a low voice.

"'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all," said Faradeane. "Better to have loved an angel from afar than—" He stopped short suddenly. "But there's every hope for you, Cherub," he said, with a smile.

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Bertie shook his head.

"I did think once—that is, I have thought of her always, and while I was away I sometimes plucked up heart, don't you know, to fancy that I might have a chance. But now I've seen how beautiful and queenly and altogether too good for me—" He stopped with a sigh. "Besides, there is someone else in the field," he added, ruefully.

"Yes," Faradeane looked at him inquiringly.

"Yes," said Bertie. "There is a fellow there—confound him!—I fancy he is always at the Grange—a man named Bradstone. He has built that huge furnace, 'The Maples.'"

Faradeane nodded.

"I know. He is a financier, or something of that kind. I have heard of him. But surely Miss Vanley—"

"No," said Bertie, promptly, but with a troubled look. "No, I don't think that Olivia cares for him, or is even very friendly; but—he paused— but the fellow is very much at home there, and the squire seems to have taken to him."

"I see," said Faradeane; "but keep your heart up. From the glimpse I got of Miss Vanley's face I don't think she is the girl to be smitten by Mr. Bradstone. No!" and a grave smile flickered across his face as he looked dreamily through the window. "No, I don't think you need be apprehensive in that quarter, Cherub. If there is any truth in a woman's eyes, Miss Vanley has a soul above the reach of such a man as this Bradstone."

Bertie laid his hand upon his arm and pressed it gratefully.

"This is just like you, old fellow!" he said. "You understand at once, and—and always know how to sympathize and encourage a man. Thank you! Thank you! Ah, I wish you would know her," he added, wistfully.

For a moment Faradeane stood silent and dreamy, then he roused himself and almost sternly said:

"No, no! by no means! And now, Cherub, you had better go. This is long enough for a first visit to a man you have never met before," he smiled. "Some one has certainly seen you come in and will see you go out, and will be—confound them!—curious. If you are asked—you see I am obliged to coach you in falsehood," he put in bitterly, "you can say that you called to remonstrate with me for allowing that savage dog of mine to be loose; and that, finding me rather a decent kind of a man, you stopped to make my acquaintance."

"Very well," assented Bertie, sadly.

"And now, good-by," said Faradeane, gently pushing him to the door.

Bertie held his hand for a moment or two in a firm grasp, and then went down the path. At the gate he looked back. The tall, graceful figure was leaning against the doorpost, and there was something in the attitude, something in the expression of the handsome Van Dyke face, a suggestion of such terrible loneliness and hopelessness and despair, combined with a noble kind of resignation and

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calmness, that the Cherub's tender heart throbbed with a sympathetic pain.

Harold Faradeane remained there lost in thought for a moment; then, followed closely by the huge dog, he went back to the room, and, as if with an effort to discard something from his mind, sat down to the table and began to write.

He wrote for a few moments with that rapidity which indicates a stern determination; then gradually the pen slowed off, and presently he was absently sketching something on the blotting-pad.

Suddenly he started, and he gazed at what he had drawn, and a strange expression of fear, almost—leaped into his eyes. He had drawn an outline, striking in its truth, of Olivia's face.

With a kind of groan he sprang to his feet, tore the sketch into fragments, and, striding to the door, scattered them to the winds.

"Great Heaven!" he murmured, with a bitter smile. "Bertie must be right. I must be going mad! Stark, staring, raving mad!" and he thrust his hands into his pockets, and leaped against the door with his head dropping despondently upon his breast.

Suddenly in the silence of the gloaming—it was almost dark in the tree-shaded Dell—a sound smote upon his ears, and caused him to look up quickly.

It was the sound of a runaway horse, and no man who has heard it can ever mistake it. It was coming down the road in the direction of the cottage. He ran down the narrow, flower-lined path, and vaulted over the gate, just as a small pony, with a light cart behind it, came tearing up. Faradeane made a spring for the pony's head, and caught the reins. Even small ponies, when they are on the bolt, are tough customers to tackle; and Faradeane was thrown to the ground. When he got to his feet again after a sharp tussle, and still holding to the reins with a grip of iron, he was shocked and horrified to see a slim, girlish figure lying half in and half out of the cart.

(To be Continued.)

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