



The Web;

OR, PASSION. LOVE'S TRUL

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A Taetical Friend.

There was another delicate drive to Lady Ferndale's house, during which the two "foolish-but-happy-young persons" discussed the situation in all its bearings.

If anything could have increased Nora's love for Cyril, his indifference to the loss of her fortune, and his cheerful assent to the surrender of it without a struggle, would have done so. To her he seemed the very type of all that was noble in man, and Cyril felt extremely uncomfortable as she nestled against him and whispered her praise in his ears.

"What on earth will she say when she learns the truth?" he thought. They reached the Ferndales' house and were shown into the drawing-room, and in a minute or two Nora was in her friend's arms.

"My dear Nora! Why, what has brought you up to London so unexpectedly? And Mr. Burne, too?" Then she smiled and held out her hand to Cyril.

"I suppose I've got to congratulate you, Mr. Burne?"

"Yes, Lady Ferndale, Nora has consented to make me the happiest of men."

"And you've come to tell me," she said. "Now, that is what I call really good and kind. Come and sit down—what is the matter?" she broke off, for Nora clung to her and began to cry quietly.

"You tell her," she said to Cyril. "It was comparatively easy to tell Mr. Petherick, but Lady Ferndale was quite another person."

Cyril unfolded the strange story, and Lady Ferndale listened with scarcely an interruption; then she drew Nora's head down on her bosom and stroked the soft, bronze hair.

"If I were to say that I'm not surprised, Mr. Burne, would you believe me?" she said at last. "But it is true! I can't say I actually suspected that Nora was not the daughter of the earl and countess, but I can say that I am not astonished. From the first moment I saw her, her likeness to the earl and the Arrowdale

family struck me, and I remarked upon it to him. Will it be very wicked to say that I am—am rather glad? Oh, wait, though, there is all that money!"

"Or rather there was," said Nora. "It has all gone now."

Lady Ferndale looked rather grave. "I can't say that I am pleased at that," she said. "But perhaps the earl will—"

"Why should he?" said Nora, smiling. "I am no relation of his, dear Lady Ferndale. And, indeed, indeed, we don't want any of the money!" and she glanced shyly at Cyril, who hastened to corroborate.

"We don't want a penny, I assure you, Lady Ferndale," he said. "The earl may keep it all for what we care; eh, Nora? All I want is Nora."

Lady Ferndale smiled. "He seems a very bold young man, dear," she whispered to Nora.

"And we have come to ask you if you think we could be married in four days."

"It is impossible!" murmured Nora. "Tell him so!"

"Good gracious me, why do you want to get married so quickly?" exclaimed Lady Ferndale.

"He will not give me the reason," said Nora, blushing.

"Because I can't," said Cyril, almost bluntly. "But, I'll tell you what I will do. I will tell Lady Ferndale, and if she agrees with me that the reason is good enough, will you consent?"

"As I'm sure she will not—yes," said Nora.

"Very well, then," said Lady Ferndale, very much amused and puzzled. "Now, you go upstairs—of course you'll remain with us. I'm going to send to that hotel for your luggage directly—and Mr. Burne shall persuade me, if he can, that there is any rhyme or reason in his absurd proposal."

Nora left the room, and Cyril sprang the truth upon Lady Ferndale as if it had been a bombshell.

"You see, Lady Ferndale," he said, with a merry smile, "I'm Lord Arrowdale, and I naturally want to marry Nora before she learns who I am."

Lady Ferndale did jump this time. "You—you are—?" Then she burst out laughing. "Well, of all the stupid people, I have been the stupidest. I told Nora the first time I saw you—you remember the day she and I were driving together—I told her that I was certain I had seen your face before; and so I had, or something very like it, in the portrait gallery at the Court! And so you are the new earl! And you have been hiding it from her, and from all of us, all this time! And it's to you all this money of the poor girl's will go?"

"Just for a day or two," he said, with a smile. "I am going to make it over as a deed of gift to her, of course."

"Of course," said Lady Ferndale. "And what you are afraid of is—"

"That Nora's pride, if she learns who and what I am, will be aroused, and she may put all sorts of obstacles in the way of our marriage. And I can't run even the slightest risk of that, Lady Ferndale," he said, with a shake of the head. "So if you'll please to regard me as Cyril Burne, the not altogether unsuccessful artist, and let her continue to so regard me, I think she will marry me out of hand."

"Well, I think she will," admitted

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Lady Ferndale, with a naive smile. "But," she said, with sudden gravity, "have you thought of what the world will say when it hears that you and she have married so soon after the death of the late earl, your uncle, and her supposed father? Have you thought of that, Mr. Burne?"

"No, I haven't," he said, quietly and coolly. "You see, since we met yesterday, and—were reconciled, I have not had time to think of anything, or anybody, but herself; but if you'll stand by me and get her to consent, I don't care one brass farthing what the world says," and as he confronted Lady Ferndale, his face lit up with a smile which won that lady's heart over to his side in a moment.

"You shall have her, Mr. Burne—Lord Arrowdale—oh, dear!"

"Mr. Burne, please!" he said, laughing wondrously.

So it happened that when Nora came in, and going up to Lady Ferndale, said with downcast face:

"Well, dear, have you explained to him how impossible it is?"

Lady Ferndale replied, demurely: "Mr. Burne has convinced me that the marriage should take place within the week, dear, and I've promised him it shall!" and to Nora's little cry of dismay she vouchsafed nothing but a laugh.

It was useless for Nora to attempt to argue or protest. She was one against three, for Jack, to whom she appealed to help her fight against Lady Ferndale and Cyril, basely deserted her and went over to the enemy, and at last Nora gave in, only stipulating that the wedding should be as quiet as it could legally be.

"We'll be married in the coal cellar and swear the clergyman to secrecy, if you like," said Cyril. "As for me, I can dispense with bridesmaids and best man—no, I can't, I must have Jack; but I'll let the cake and cards go."

"And I must have the cake," said Lady Ferndale. "And now, Mr. Burne as Nora and I will have to work really hard for the next few days, I shall be glad if you will go down to your club, and—stay there as much as you can. Stop, though," she added, suddenly, as if something had occurred to her; "now I think of it, Nora will have to do some shopping, and if you will promise to bring her back to dinner, you shall go with her. I'll give you till dinner time."

A more delightful proposal for both of the infatuated young persons she could not have made, and very soon they had gone off in one of Nora's beloved hansoms.

Then Lady Ferndale sat herself down in the drawing-room and waited for something she expected.

Half an hour afterward Mr. Petherick was announced. He was not the visitor she had been expecting, but she was at home to him, and the old lawyer, in a state of suppressed excitement, began at once on the all-engrossing topic.

"Lady Nora—I mean Miss Nora," he said, "of course she has told you what has occurred, Lady Ferndale?"

"Yes," she responded, adding, mentally, as she thought of Cyril's identity, which Mr. Petherick was yet ignorant of, "and more than you know."

"I—er—I'm glad to be able to discuss the matter with you without reserve," he went on. "Of course, you know that she is engaged to Mr. Burne?"

"And that they are to be married immediately," said Lady Ferndale.

"Yes, yes. Dear me!" he said. "Well, I can't say I disapprove. Of course, I've no voice in the matter, no right to express an opinion; the young lady is no longer the late earl's daughter and—they are to be married immediately?"

"It is to be kept a profound secret; I mean really a secret, not an open one which every one may know."

"Yes, yes," he nodded; "and I—er—think it is as well. I've a high opinion of Mr. Burne, and I've been making some inquiries. Of course, if she had been Lady Nora still he would not be at all a suitable match, but as it is—"

"As she is absolutely penniless, poor girl," said Lady Ferndale, with a smile, "and they are ridiculously in love with each other—"

"Yes, yes, I understand, and I hope—I hope with all my heart they will be as happy as even you and I could wish them. But now, Lady Ferndale, I must tell you my other reason for calling on you at this unusually early hour. I have had a visitor this morning; in fact, he has only just left my office."

"Yes!" said Lady Ferndale, demurely. "May I guess? It is Mr. Guildford Berton, is it not?"

"You are right, and—ahem—I must say his visit was an extremely trying one for me. It is very hard, Lady Ferndale, when one knows a man to be a scoundrel, to refrain from telling him so, and—requesting him to leave one's presence."

"Oh, I do hope you didn't tell him!" she exclaimed, with dismay.

"Well—er—no, I didn't; I kept my temper, and—temperized. Of course, he came to inquire after Lady—I mean, Miss—Nora."

"Of course."

"My dear lady, I never saw a man so altered in so short a time. If I had not known from Miss Nora's story that the fellow was a villain, I think I could have pitied him. He looks—well, ten years older, and though he maintained his usual command over himself, I could see that he only succeeded by an effort simply—simply—superhuman."

"And you told him?"

"That I didn't know where Lady Nora was, which I did not at that moment," he said, with a faint blush. "It was literally true, Lady Ferndale, though scarcely substantially so, eh?"

Lady Ferndale smiled at this.

"What will he do next?"

"Come here," he replied, promptly. "He will naturally conclude that she has taken refuge with you, and will, I fear, come on here and demand to see her."

"I shall be quite prepared for him," said Lady Ferndale. "You think I am able to protect the dear girl, even from such a clever scoundrel as Mr. Guildford Berton, Mr. Petherick?"

"I think you are capable of protecting her from the whole world, my dear lady," he responded, looking at the resolute little face; "and that being so, I'll take my leave, only assuring you that if I can be of the slightest service to dear Miss Nora or Mr. Cyril Burne or yourself, you may command me," and he made his old-fashioned bow.

"And you haven't found the young earl, Mr. Petherick?" she said, demurely.

(To be Continued.)

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- B Bartlett, John Basher, Winnie, card, Quid Vidi Rd. Bell, Wm., str., Nagle's Hill Byrne, Edward, card, Alexander St. Buchan, Miss Mary, Duckworth St. Byrnes, Miss A., Prescott St. Best, Joseph, Holloway St. Boudins, Mrs. Joseph, Willis Range Diamond, Miss, late Newtown Bursey, Mrs. A. L., care Mrs. Hinds Bursey, Susan, red. Brace, Miss Mary Byrne, R. C. Burry, Mrs. Baxter, Long's Hill Barnes, J. J., Boggan St.
- C Carr, Mrs. Augusta, card Chaulker, Miss Maud, Military Road Colbert, Thomas, red. Cotter, D., Nagle's Hill Cooper, W. W. Corkum, Miss Helen V., Gower St. Cuff, George care Joseph Ryan, Murray St. Constable, Miss Lizzie Cole, Mrs. Philip, card, Livingstone St. Churchill, George, Gower St.
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- F Foley, Miss Annie, Lime St. Ford, Mrs. E., red. Flynn, Miss Katie, Mullock St.
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- N Newhook, Leander Nicholas, John Nixon, Mrs. D., card, Mundy Pond Rd. Noseworthy, Miss Ida, Bond St. Nugent, Mrs. Edward P., 34 — St.
- O Osbourne, James, Hamilton Avenue. O'Sawyer, Mrs. Frank
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- R Rellis, Miss B., card, care Parker & Monroe Richardson, care G. P. O.
- S Shaw, Jane, card Sainsbury, Paul, late Newtown, B.B. Shaw, Miss C. Simmons, K., Pleasant St. Simms, Miss Bride, New Gower St. Scott, Miss Fannie, care Mr. Ryan, LeMerchant Rd. Snow, Mrs. Timothy, Duckworth St. Shute, Mrs. James, Simms' St. Stone, John, South Side Spurrell, Herbert, care G. P. O. Squires, Miss Sarah, Henry St. Spurrell, Miss Blanche, New Gower Street Sheppard, John Saunders, Miss Maud, Cabot St.
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War News

Messages Received Previous to

GREECE. LONDON. Router's Athens correspondent the Greek Government diplomatic representatives tent a series of statements in response to the last note. These statements, the despatch neither refusal nor the Entente note, but difficulties in the way of some of the terms of the despatch last Saturday. Greece had not rejected certain clauses of the note which demands the recent outbreak in which the Entente soldiers on.

ANOTHER ROUMANIAN FALLEN

LONDON. Another Rumanian fallen into the hands of the who are keeping up their forward movement along the line northward into the Marshal Von Mackensen taken Fokshani with prisoners and some machine guns. At last Russian raiders were pursuing the Russians, while piles of cold weather and the Duke Joseph of Austria, back the Rumanian east Moldavia between Putna and Valleys. The capture of which lies on the railway northwest of Galatz, affords this important Danube great jeopardy. The office in its last official notice the capture of Fokshani cordis the repulse of the of the town in the region of eschi where they are preferred heavy casualties. The of the Teutonic allied general other places, notably tance from where the enters into Sereth, a southwest of Galatz, also Up in the region of Rha have taken trenches in mans in the village of in addition captured machine guns, trench mortars, heavy battery. In a 1904 in this region the Rumanian on 15 cannon, about 100 and in other theatres there little activity except heavy patrol parties.

RUSSIAN REPORT

PETROGRAD. The war office communicated to-day says: On the western front our detachment possession of a village in the of the northwestern corner of Tirul. After a stubborn struggle captured enemy trenches, a village of Kaluzane, south western end of Lake Bait, some prisoners, machine guns mortars and one horse battery the fierce counter attack by the south were repulsed. In the mouth of Lake Bait some it

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