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Love a Conqueror

—OR—
WEDDED AT LAST.

CHAPTER XXX.

"It is not much like living at an inn when you have a lot of servants with you," said Lord Rupert, laughing, "and necessities down from London three or four times a week."

"Isn't it?" the little widow questioned innocently. "Never mind; I will be something to talk of this autumn in our shooting season visits."

"Ah, perhaps it will!" his lordship said languidly. "Serve to amuse you ladies when we're after the grouse."

"You are all chattering so much that you give me no opportunity of telling Major Stuart how delightful we shall be to accommodate him for as long as he will take pity on us. Interposed Alice, in her sweetest manner. "Sir Hugh—Shirley, ad your entreaties to mine."

"No other entreaties could be needed, Lady Eastwell, I assure you, and you are tempting me beyond all my powers of resistance," Guy answered smiling. "But I shall not trespass on your hospitality more than one night and I will start to-morrow, if you will allow me. Perhaps some of these gentlemen will feel inclined to walk a few miles with me."

"I dare say I shall," said Sir Hugh rather eagerly. "I am tired of this riding and driving. It is almost as bad as London."

"Then you will stay, Major Stuart?" said Mrs. Beaudesert, with her most bewitching smile; and, after another momentary struggle with his better judgment, Guy stayed. Ah, how often and how bitterly in after days he repented having yielded to their wishes.

man, as she stood leaning over the stone balustrade and chatting in soft lowered tones to Lord Rupert, while she puffed away at her cigarette.

"It is so charming to be in a place where you can do as you like," she was saying softly. "Now in Brighton one would not dare to smoke on a balcony."

"Lots of women do," said his lordship, looking at her admiringly.

"Ah, but they are women who have no respect for the proprieties," she answered. "Now Alice would be horrified if she were to see me smoke."

"No? You don't mean it? I should have given Lady Eastwell credit for more sense," said Lord Rupert, in amazement.

"Oh, she's awfully prudish!" "Prudish! I like that!" laughed his lordship. "Why, she flirts out sgeously with Glyn."

"She tries to do so," Mrs. Beaudesert said sweetly; "but Sir Hugh is quite too awfully in love with his life to respond."

And then they laughed softly in poken lower tones, and Guy and Captain Layton, smoking at the other end of the balcony, were silent, but not a little jealous at the pressure Lord Rupert was making with his little widow, the former looking thoughtfully down the street, with its gas lamps and lighted shop-windows, and the blue starlit sky overhead.

Suddenly he bent forward eagerly and looked keenly after a man who had walked past the "Pack of Cards," dancing up at the balcony as he passed. Guy looked after him for a moment, and Captain Layton removed his cigar from his mouth.

"Any one you know?" he asked carelessly.

"One of Sir Hugh's servants, 'ancy," Guy answered, with indifference. "His face seemed familiar to me."

"By the way, we might as well go in," drawled Captain Layton. "We are rather de trop here."

Guy smiled as he threw away his cigar and followed Frederic Layton into the sitting room, leaving the glass doors open behind them. The room was lighted only by a couple of oil-lamps—gas being an innovation which had penetrated only as far as the bar-parlor in the "Pack of Cards"—which threw a subdued light over the shabby comfortable furniture. Shirley was seated at the piano, playing scraps of melody softly with one hand. Lord Eastwell had fallen asleep in an armchair in the corner, Alice was dozing in another, and Sir

Hugh Glyn, leaning back in a low chair, was watching Shirley's graceful figure in her pretty white dress as she sat at the piano, with a curious intent miserable look in his handsome blue eyes which rather startled Guy. He moved slightly when the two young men entered, and looked up, then changed his position, altering his chair so that his face was no longer in the light.

"You don't seem very lively here," said Captain Layton laughing. "Will you come and have a game of billiards, Glyn?"

"Thanks, not to-night, Shirley, give us some music," Sir Hugh said, his voice changing suddenly when he addressed his wife.

She glanced at him over her shoulder and smiled a little; and his face brightened with such a swift sudden brightness that it touched Shirley.

"I shall wake Lord Eastwell," she said softly.

"What does it matter? It was hardly polite to us both for him to fall asleep."

"Play something soft," suggested Captain Layton, "or sing, will you, Lady Glyn? I have not heard you for an age."

"I don't think I shall ever sing again," said Shirley, shaking her head.

"And why not?" Sir Hugh asked quickly, with a sudden anxious glance towards her.

"Because I heard such charming singing to-day—such a delicious voice so pure and sweet. You heard it too, Major Stuart?"

"Yes, it was very beautiful," Guy said dreamily, his thoughts going back to the pretty group he had surprised among the rocks.

"Who was the singer?" asked Captain Layton, eagerly. "You will be charitable and tell me, Lady Glyn. You know that I am fanatical as regards all things musical."

"Does that mean music-mad?" Shirley said gaily.

"Yes. Do take pity upon my madness, Lady Glyn," entreated the young fellow.

"How? By playing to you or by ratiifying your curiosity?"

"In both ways," he answered, in the same pleading manner. "Who is this charming musician, Lady Glyn? Major Stuart, do take pity on my impatience!"

"She is Miss Ada Grey, the vicar's second daughter," said Shirley, her little fingers straying softly over the keys.

"The vicar's second daughter," he repeated eagerly. "Is she pretty?"

"I think so," Lady Glyn answered. "So do I," said Major Stuart, smiling.

"Will you take me to church under our wing next Sunday, Lady Glyn?" said Captain Layton; and while Shirley answered him laughingly, Guy turned to Sir Hugh.

"By the bye, Glyn, that man La-relle, is he still in your service?"

Sir Hugh's face was in the shadow, but it had not been so, Guy Stuart could not but have noticed how it changed, growing pale and startled at the simple question.

"Larelle?" he repeated. "No. Why did you ask?"

"I thought I saw him pass the house a few minutes since," said Guy, carelessly, "and concluded that you must have him here with you. But this is not a very uncommon physique, and in all probability it was some chance likeness which struck me."

Sir Hugh made no answer.

Presently, Lord Rupert and Mrs. Beaudesert came in, Shirley, leaving the piano, came and stood by the table, slim and graceful in her white gown; and Alice, rousing up, flushed and smiling, from her nap, suggested a game of loo, a suggestion which was received with acclamation by all but Sir Hugh, Shirley and Captain Layton, who resolved to show his displeasure to Mrs. Beaudesert by abstaining from her favourite amusement and sulking.

The game began amid a good deal of chit-chat and laughter. Major Stuart was playing rather absentmindedly and was forced twice in succession. Mrs. Beaudesert, looking at him laughingly, opined that he must be in love.

"The pretty singer perhaps," said Sir Hugh, making an effort to appear at his ease. "Layton, look to yourself."

"He's going away to-morrow," rejoined Captain Layton, sauntering over

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er to the piano. "I shall have it all my own way then."

"He's not obliged to go," said Lady Eastwell, smiling.

Captain Layton shrugged his shoulders as he sat down and began softly playing a waltz. Shirley crossed the room to her husband's side, standing beside his chair for a moment.

"Are you not well?" she said; and there was a very unusual gentleness softening the coldness of her voice as she spoke which made Sir Hugh's weary blue eyes brighten perceptibly.

"My head aches," he said. "This room is insufferably hot."

"Shall we try a breath of fresh air on the balcony?"

Sir Hugh rose at once.

"Will it not be cold for you, dear?" he said, in a low tone.

"Oh, no; I have a shawl here."

She allowed him to fold it around her in silence, and they passed out on to the balcony together. Major Stuart glanced up for a moment from the cards that he held to look after them as they went, with a warm and cordial light in his eyes.

"It is pleasant here," Shirley said a little unsteadily, as she stood on the balcony.

There was something new and unfamiliar about this tete-a-tete with her husband which made her feel a little self-reproachful as she remembered how earnestly Guy had entreated her, ere he left her on that day in London, to forgive Hugh the wrong he had done her, and to live in amity with him. She had made but few efforts since then; but she had not been quite so contemptuously cold perhaps.

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