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**Love That Knew No Bounds.**

CHAPTER VII.

At which point he offered to Mrs. Alwyn the opinion she had been awaiting with profound impatience.

They were sitting, these two, discussing afternoon tea under the shade of a splendid lime upon the square of lawn which, bordered by a tall hedge of yew, parted The Dale from the dusty high road. With judicial gravity, and a silence betokening something important at hand, the major had stirred his beverage, melted an extra lump of sugar, watched the small seething collection of bubbles thereupon gather and disperse and imbibed the contents of his cup; after which, setting it down, folding his arms and crossing his legs, he said, very deliberately—for hasty speech or manner would, he conceived, be derogatory to Rupert and himself—

"Well, Helen, do you know, on the whole, I'm inclined to think that arrangement you mentioned in your letter to me a very sensible one; taking one thing with another, I might almost say a desirable one. If the young folks find it to their mind, I really may as well say at once I shan't stand in their way."

Mrs. Alwyn felt as though, this first step gained, the rest would surely follow in its train. With a smile intended to convey the gratification of a mother and the gratitude of a sister-in-law, she answered,

"Now, how very good that is of you, Alfred! But I knew that, though even you can not tell the wear and tear of nerves brought about by constantly dwelling on two daughters' futures, yet I was sure you would enter into my cares. I was positive you would see no indiscretion in my writing as I did; that you would help me if you could. Thank you," laying her hand effusively upon his arm. "Oh, thank you so very much!"

"Well, there," said the gallant major scarcely at ease under such a gush of affectionate eloquence; "let's wait and see what you have to be thankful for first. You must bear in mind I can't force Rupert's inclinations any more than you can force Miss Sydney's."

"What, the people of Oakleigh Place? The earl's family you were speaking about yesterday? You surely don't mean my niece is going to marry one of them?"

"Gently, my dear major. We must not speak, or even think, positively about it. Only I felt I must admit you to my confidence thus far. It's the second son; the Hon. Edward Duvesne—honorable and reverend, for he is rector of Oakleigh too. It's the family living—eight hundred a year. So no doubt he was put in the Church on purpose to get it."

"I shouldn't have thought an earl's second son would have needed that," commented the major. "I thought the Comynghams were a wealthy family."

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"And that would be quite impossible!" put in Miss Sydney's mother, with emphasis.

"And right enough it should be so. I've no doubt," returned the old officer. "I've often heard that any halberd's sure to hurt if you don't slip your head through of your own free will. Still, I must say fairly that I like this youngest girl of yours well enough to wish for her for Rupert. Perhaps as I've told you this without mincing matters, you won't mind explaining how it is that she gets over the traces here at home? How she and Leonora contrive to fall out?"

"Forewarned, forearmed—eh? She doesn't look to me an unmanageable lass."

"Unmanageable! Oh dear, no!" answered Mrs. Alwyn, hastily—that term repeated might scare Mr. Rupert. "Pray, don't think I ever intended to convey such a thing. She's simply the complete opposite of Leonora and myself. To put it as briefly and expressively as possible, a thorough Alwyn. All our differences, all our difficulties lie in that. Nothing short of living with us would open your eyes to what that means. But, of course, I naturally strive after Sydney's happiness, and I confess I see it most directly, most clearly, in a suitable marriage."

"And you're not anxious to make Miss Leonora happy in the same way?" said the major, bluntly, but a trifle puzzled. The same end attained by the absence of either daughter, he couldn't understand why seniority should not have priority in matrimonial honors. "There's no question about my niece being uncommonly handsome. You don't intend her for an old maid, do you?"

The gentleman was nearer the root of the matter than he suspected. Mrs. Alwyn colored, and mounted her gold eye-glasses, as she had a trick of always doing if confused.

"And old maid! Oh dear, no!" she returned, looking down and flicking bits of lime-blossom off her skirts. "There is no likelihood of that, indeed. Leonora has had more than one offer from—or, well, as she declined them, I need not say from whom." Thus the lady sallied away from explanation of these suitors' ineligibility. "And now," lowering her voice as Leonora appeared in the distance, "just at this time there appears a great probability of her having a proposal which I think would fulfil my best expectations for her. You have heard me mention the Comynghams?"

"What, the people of Oakleigh Place? The earl's family you were speaking about yesterday? You surely don't mean my niece is going to marry one of them?"

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"Are, but not were," explained Mrs. Alwyn. "This earl has only just got the title, you know. The late one was his cousin, and was expected to marry some day, quite up to the time of his sudden death. So these people—they used simply to be the Duvesnes, 'Mr. and Mrs.' not even honorable—were really, considering their birth, not at all rich, and were glad enough to secure eight hundred a year for their son. The old rector died just after the late earl, most conveniently, and Edward Duvesne read himself in at Oakleigh a few Sundays before his father came down to the place last spring."

"And you say this gentleman is making up to Leonora?"

"He certainly seems very much attracted. We have attended his little church lately—Leonora and I. Sydney always finds something to keep her to this place, and so comfortable; not half so draughtily as our larger, rambling building, where I get neuralgia dreadfully. Mr. Duvesne sent us hymn-books by the clerk. He has called on us two or three times, and often walks halfway home by Leonora. Of course, I have called at the Place, and the countess has left cards here. If nothing—if no one interferes, I believe it will end in my dear child entering the Comyngham circle. I think that would be a marriage we should have every reason to congratulate her and ourselves on. Lord Comyngham is the seventh earl, and his eldest son is single yet."

Mrs. Alwyn dropped her glasses, and drew up her still handsome figure, all her passion for position, once so grievously humiliated, ringing on in her last words; such a dazzling vista opening out for her beautiful daughter, no wonder she undertook to rough hew from the path any obstacle between her and the brilliant goal.

Brilliant, indeed! To the major seemed rather impossibly so; but it was not his place to damp her bubbles, so threading his way back through these enchanting prospects to the point whence he had started he rather provoked his sister-in-law by asking, calmly,

"Will you excuse me for being very stupid, but for the life of me, I can't see why you shouldn't settle on Leonora and her honorable and reverend before troubling yourself about little Sydney. She doesn't interfere with the illustrious suitor, does she?"

Mrs. Alwyn bit her lip, and tapped her foot on the grass, impatiently, these elderly men were frightfully dense—what the natives of St. Clair could call pig-headed!

To admit Leonora the least fraction of jealousy was not to be thought of so with the self-abnegation demanded occasionally of maternal schemers: she took the weak point over as a private grievance, and answered accordingly.

"Of course, Sydney doesn't wish to interfere. I quite acquit her of any such design. But you can see she is liable to be present whenever this gentleman calls. Is apt to be put forward by injudicious friends of her own, as she was only the other day by those people named Dace, and the rector, at a sort of village feast. I can tell you how presently. And, excuse me for saying it, dear Major Villiers, but a woman like myself, who has seen much of the world, knows how soon a man's fancy is distracted that trifles sometimes upset the chance of life-long happiness. I felt I should never forgive myself if I didn't smooth our Leonora's way as

much as possible, and I felt too, that I was more than justified when at the same time I was doing my best to promote Sydney's welfare. Oh, I'm afraid this all seems very perplexing to you, a man; but I do hope you believe and trust me to be doing my best as—a mother."

It was rather perplexing, certainly; but while the lady was explaining and counter-explaining herself out of the maze, and rather obviously getting her guiding threads into confusion, the major had mentally made an honest short-cut, and reached what happened to be precisely the right conclusion.

"Fact is," he thought, "she makes a hash of one and fowl of the other, as old Alister would have said. That's about the long and short of it; and metaphorically giving himself a pat on the back for his acumen in finding his out, he got up to close the conference with a polite speech.

"Oh, yes, yes. Naturally you do our best all round, Helen, and certainly I wish both your young folks good luck. And I won't quarrel with the part of your plan which offers me of them to my boy. Let me see. Rupert is pretty well tied to the desk, but he'll have two or three leave days in August. May I tell him to run down then?"

"Certainly! Before, if he likes. From the Saturday evening to Monday morning. We will send to meet him, and have him driven back for the seven o'clock train from Hemyngham."

"I'll tell him, then, and you'll soon have him over. And I'm not to give a hint of what he comes for to my dark-haired friend yonder?" nodding toward Sydney, who had just entered the garden from the village.

"Not for a moment. Not a word, please."

"So be it. This is a pretty place, his Dale," looking at the white gabled house, ivy up the front, clematis over the porch, panelled door-way and mullioned windows; "how came our brother to own it? It looks as though it should belong to somequire of these parts rather than be a loose bit of property to a man from another county."

"It was once one of the Comyngham residences," explained Mrs. Alwyn; "a Duvesne lived here for generations, I believe. But the last earl's grandfather lost heavily at cards, and 've been told that The Dale changed hands one night over the whist table. Then it had two or three different owners, and came into the market when William was living at St. Edmund's; and so, as he got it cheap, he bought it. You know he is always ready for a bargain, by road, river, or rail."

"And mostly makes a good thing of it, I'll warrant," said the major; "well, it has come in handy for you. Suits you admirably. It's lucky Mr. Russell has not been tempted by a good offer to sell it over your head, for you would hardly like to leave it now."

(To be Continued.)

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The Pattern is cut in 3 sizes: Small, Medium and Large. It requires 3 1/4 yards of 36 inch material for a Medium size.

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