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**The Lost Will;
OR,
LOVE TRIUMPHS AT LAST.**

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Oh, no," assented Mrs. Feltham with a laugh. "No man is more capable of taking care of himself than Jack. No, I don't suppose he has been run over, or anything of that sort; but it is very strange that he hasn't written to me and told me where he is and what he is doing. I have a kind of dread that he may be ill."

Nora was sorely tempted to solve the mystery by saying, as calmly as she could: "Mr. Chalfonte has gone off with Maud Delman." But she shrank from wounding Mrs. Feltham's feelings, and, instead, she said: "Oh, I don't think that is likely. Mr. Chalfonte is very strong and healthy; I can scarcely imagine his being too ill to write; besides, some one could have written for him."

"That's true," said Mrs. Feltham, with a perplexed sigh. "Well, I don't understand it; it's quite unlike Jack. Do you know, dear, I think I'll run up to town and see Mr. Tredgate."

"I should," said Nora; "but I am sure there is no cause for anxiety, why, in Australia men go off for weeks, months, and you hear nothing of them, and usually they come back all safe and sound."

"I dare say; but this isn't Australia, my dear," observed Mrs. Feltham, shaking her head. "Yes, I'll go up to town this morning."

After she had departed Nora went for a ride. She did not go to the Abbey, but struck off across the moor for one of the distant farms; and during the whole of her solitary ride she tried to convince herself that he was indeed heartless, that he was so absorbed in his own happiness as to be indifferent to his cousin's anxiety.

It was a very unenjoyable ride, and as she was returning, tired and listless, she was stopped by old Fleming, who was standing by his gate and had evidently been waiting for her. He was a very old man, with a bent figure and red-rimmed eyes, and the hand he raised to his forehead was trembling with weakness and nervousness. Nora had spoken to him once or twice before, and she pulled up the mare and greeted him in a friendly way.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Fleming. I hope you are well? Do you want to speak to me?"

"Ain't your pardon, Miss Norton, I did rather," he quavered. "No, I bean't so well as I might be. You see, I'm comin' on in years, and growin' a bit feeble. And I'm summat troubled in my mind about my boy, Stephen."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Mr. Flem-

ing," said Nora, and she frowned involuntarily; for here it was again; at every step something cropped up to remind her of Jack. "Nothing has happened to your son, I hope?"

"Well, I dunno," responded the old man, shaking his head; "that's just it. I ain't heard nothing of him. He went away quite sudden-like, without sending more than good-bye, or telling me where he was goin'. And that weren't like him; for, though Steve was a bit wild, as young men are given to sometimes, he was always a good son to me; yes, I'll say that for un, allus good, even when he'd got a drop of liquor in him. I 'ad an illa, as he'd gone to the Colonies; but lately, thinkin' things over, it's been borne in on me that he hasn't."

"What makes you think that?" asked Nora.

"Well, you see, miss, he didn't take no luggage with him, no outfit, as you might call it, nothing proper for the voyage. And there was no reason as he should go empty-handed; we're not so poor as he couldn't 'a gone well provided for." With an effort he drew himself up with a little show of pride. "No, miss, I'm thinkin' as he hasn't left England, an' I'm afeared he's gone up to Lunnun, an' may be in trouble there. Lunnun's a terrible place for young men, especially when they're a bit wild like my Steve."

"He hasn't written?" said Nora somewhat absently; for she could not help thinking of the similarity between Jack's silence and Stephen Fleming's.

"No, miss," replied old Fleming, shaking his head. "Not a word, not even a postcard. You see, miss, when he went away he weren't altogether what you might call in 'is right mind. Not lunny, aggsactly, but all topsy-turvy. Beggin' you pardon, miss, Steve was upset about a young gel in the village there. My experience is that it's generally some young gel as to blame, when a young man goes wild. I dessey you may 'ave 'eard of her—but of course you 'ave—Maud Delman, the glove-maker."

"I 'ave—heard of her," said Nora, almost laconically, and looking straight before her.

"Yes, miss. A decent kind of gel, and one as would 'ave suited Steve right enough. As a matter of fact, I did think as they'd make a match of it; but there was some one else—"

"He paused in a confused and bewildered way, as if he had remembered suddenly that Mr. Chalfonte was Miss Norton's agent, and therefore a kind of personage of whom it would not be proper for him to speak ill. "Well, there it is, miss; there ain't no trying to go agin natur; gels will be gels, and they'll make their own choice and follow their own whimsies. All the same, it was a bit hard on Steve, and I do not make so bold as to maintain that she's the cause of his trouble."

There was silence for a moment; then his thin, shrill voice went on, still more quaveringly:

"I was wonderin', miss, if you could 'elp me to find Steve. You big and mighty ones o' the earth have ways and means of larnin' things which is denied to us low and ignorant ones. You see, miss, I want him back," he went on plaintively. "I ain't no good at the farm here without him, and very soon I should 'ave to give up; and where I'm to go, 'cept the workus, the Lord knows. If I can get Steve back—Lord bless 'ee, miss, do 'ee help me, if 'ee can!"

Not a little touched by the old man's misery and helplessness, Nora nodded; then turned her head away as she said:

"I understand, Mr. Fleming; you want me to find out where your son is? Well, I'll try. I should think it would not be difficult to discover whether he has gone to the Colonies or whether he is in London. And you mustn't think of giving up the farm. Why, your family has held it for many years!"

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"Nigh upon two hundred, miss," said the old man, again trying to draw himself erect. "And nothing but a yearly agreement. Mr. Chalfonte—I mean, young Mr. Chalfonte—said as we shouldn't be turned out while we paid the rent. Them's his very words; he was a kind-hearted gentleman—w' all his faults—not 'as he's many, 'ceptin'—ah, well!—and all of us considered his word as good as his bond."

"Yes," said Nora, with a sudden ache at her heart. "Mr. Chalfonte was quite right. You shall not be turned out. I'll try to find your son, and he'll come back and everything will be right. Don't worry."

The old man raised his bleared eyes with the tears standing in them.

"God bless 'ee, miss, you've a good 'eart," he faltered. "And I do believe as you'll get Steve back to m'k I ax your pardon for speakin' to 'ee miss."

"That's all right," said Nora; and as she spoke the words, she remembered how often she had heard them on Jack's lips, and the colour, almost that of shame, rose to her face.

When she got back to the Hall she found Mr. Horton in the library, and with an abruptness which startled the lawyer, if anything could have startled him, she said:

"I have just had a talk with old Mr. Fleming at the Upper Farm. He is in trouble about his son, Stephen."

"I know," said Mr. Horton, with a nod. "He has disappeared—rather a good thing for the village."

"But a bad thing for his father," said Nora quickly. "He needs him—is worrying about him. Would it not be possible to find him?"

"Oh, quite possible," assented Mr. Horton; "or at any rate, not impossible. We have only to set a good detective on his track; he would soon be run to earth. But I should think he's left the country—for his country's good."

"His father thinks not," said Nora, gravely, and conscious of a determination to bring back the old man's son.

"I wish you would find him, or, at any rate, find out where he has gone."

"Certainly," said Mr. Horton. "I'll see about it at once. Oh, by the way, do you chance to know where the plans of the alterations at the Moor Farm are? I can't find them amongst the papers Mr. Chalfonte gave me."

"No, I don't," she replied; and, for the life of her, she could not help adding: "Why not write and ask him where they are?"

"Just so," returned Mr. Horton, with a slight frown; "but I don't happen to know Mr. Chalfonte's address. Do you?"

"No," said Nora shortly, and she left the room.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LATER on in the afternoon Nora saw Ferndale coming up the drive. He was on horseback, and presented so striking a picture of the "perfect gentleman" that Nora grew furious with herself because her heart would not leap with love and pride at sight of him. Here was a man whom every right-minded girl must admire and he ready to fall in love with, and yet his presence failed to stir within her a single warm impulse! Full of remorse, she ran down to him, with a touch of colour in her cheeks and a tenderness, constrained by conscience, not by love, in her eyes. She held out both hands to him, and Ferndale, his

olive-pale face suffused by an unwonted colour, bent over and kissed each hand, and held them until with a sudden rush of coldness she drew them away. They passed through the hall into the garden; and Ferndale proceeded to tell her of a certain architect whom—at Nora's bidding, by the way—he had consulted in regard to the restoration of the Abbey, which was to be done while they were on their honeymoon. Of course, Ferndale was deeply interested in the subject, and she tried to compel herself to share the interest, succeeding so well in persuading him that she did, that with an unusual display of feeling, he took her hand and pressed it to his heart.

"Of course all this gives me great pleasure, Nora," he said; "but I beg you to believe that it is not on my own account only. I am fond of the Abbey; but this restoration of the old place—which we owe to you, dearest, to you alone—is a delight to me because you are going to adorn it with your presence. No shrine could be too beautiful for my queen."

She blushed with guilty remorse as she said, almost reproachfully:

"That's far too big a word for me, Edward. I'm not in the least like a queen. Sometimes, when you are glorifying me, and exalting me above my place, I wonder what you would have thought of me if you had met me when I was out there in Australia, a wild—what you would have called, I am sure, quite a 'common'—girl, amongst a lot of rough miners; or if you had come upon me, a poor, shabbily-dressed girl, in a back street in one of the poorest parts of London?"

As she said the words she thought of Jack, who had seen her in the days of her poverty, who had treated her as a lady, had displayed no sense of superiority on his part. She frowned and bit her lip, and thrust the memory back from her.

"I should have admired, loved you, even then," said Ferndale. "You must have shone like a pearl amidst your surroundings. No, Nora, your past life does not affect me in the way which I imagine you sometimes think it might. I like to think of you going through all these years unscathed, unstained, and unfecked, retaining all your purity of mind and the indefinable charm which fascinates me and keeps me your worshipper, your slave."

This was very well, and Nora was not a little touched by it; but, unfortunately, Ferndale, with a little gesture, as if he were yielding to an impulse of candour, went on slowly, and in a low and troubled voice:

"No, Nora, your past is clear and unblemished. Alas! I wish that I could say the same of mine."

He paused for a moment, then, with another impulsive gesture, very unlike his usual characteristic reticence of movement, he continued:

(To be Continued.)

Fads and Fashions.

Brown furs are particularly fashionable this winter. Sleeves may be full and caught in with a narrow cuff. Tulle, we notice, is often embroidered in glittering jet. Rustling taffetas are used for the cheaper silk petticoats. White chinchi is as much liked as ever for babies' coats. Many of the new gowns are made with front and back alike.

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WAR REVIEW.

While both Germany and Austria are seeking to secure a cessation of hostilities and Turkey also is reported to be favorably disposed toward peace, the Entente Allies troops on all the battlefronts are giving no heed to peace proposals, but are continuing without mercy to drive their foes before them, and in all the battles the Allies are meeting with marked success. In France the Germans' battle line is slowly disintegrating under the violence of the Allied offensive. In Northern Italy the Austro-Hungarians are being forced back by the British, French and Italians with heavy losses in men killed and wounded, or made prisoners. Near the shores of the Mediterranean in Albania the Italians are driving the Austrians toward the Montenegr frontier, while in Asiatic Turkey, both in Syria and Mesopotamia, the British are fast clearing the Turks from their former strongholds. Although the Germans in France and Flanders are still strenuously resisting the Allied attempts to break their line they are steadily giving way under the force of the attacks. In the other theatres there apparently is not the same disposition to offer stubborn denial of the right of way except possibly in the mountain region of Italy where an attempt is being made by the Allied force to open the back-door in Austria. South of Valenciennes in France, Field Marshal Haig's forces, notwithstanding stiff opposition, have advanced their line in the general operation which have in view the capture of Valenciennes and pressing on towards Mons and Maubege in the general converging movement that is going on between Belgium and the region north of Verdun. Further south from the Oise River to the region of Rethel the French have gain-

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