



"Flowers of the Valley,"

WABEL HOWARD, OF THE LYRIC.

CHAPTER XXIX. A TERRIBLE TEMPTATION.

"I am Lady Lillian Foyle, yes." "The question was scarcely necessary," said the signor, with a wave of his hat; "Lady Lillian Foyle's beauty and grace are too well known to leave one in doubt of her identity." "Do you want to see my father, Lord Heron?" she asked, cutting him short. "He has gone out."

most magnificent estates in England. I mention no names! Secondly, we have a most lovely and charming young lady, who is to marry the hero of the drama. Thirdly, there is another young lady, who would, but—and he shrugged his shoulders—"but for an accident, have been the owner of this immense wealth instead of the hero, and, fourthly, we have a gentleman, who is a friend of all three, but who is especially the friend of the charming young bride of the hero. Good! Now, on the eve of the marriage, number four—and he touched his breast—"presents himself to the bride, and he offers"—he drew nearer—"to sell her a secret. At first she receives him scornfully—" Lady Lillian acquiesced with a haughty smile. "Scornfully! But when he tells her that he could deprive the man she is going to marry of all his wealth, and reduce him to a condition little better than that of a pauper, she— He stopped, and smiled triumphantly; for Lady Lillian had started, and the scorn had quickly vanished. "Sob!" he said, softly; "I have touched you at last, my lady!" "Your drama is a farce and a burlesque, sir," she said, recovering her old manner with an effort. "Oh, but stay," he said, insinuatingly; "it is not finished! I proceed! The lady, not ungraciously, declines to place any confidence in the gentleman, and is generally incredulous! Good! He proceeds at once to make his statement. In few words, coming to the point at once, he says—"that Lord Coverdale—tut, I have given the name, no matter—Lord Coverdale inherited the Knighthon estates in consequence of Geoffrey Knighthon having made no will." Lady Lillian leaned forward with suppressed eagerness. "But I say, my lady, that Geoffrey Knighthon made a will, in which he left everything of which he was possessed to his daughter, Iris Knighthon!" "That is false!" she murmured, taken off her guard. He smiled pleasantly. "No; it is true. And how do I know, you ask?" "I do ask it!" she said, coldly. "Saints and angels, because I stole it!" he retorted, coolly. Lady Lillian looked at him with mingled incredulity and amazement. "You stole it?" she said. "Cortes, yes!" he assented, stroking his mustache. "I stole it and I hid it. I fancied that some day it would gain in value, and—with a smile—"I don't think I was far wrong."

From that point on, the signor's path was easy, and before he left he concluded a bargain with Lady Lillian whereby the stolen will was to be delivered to her that very night in the garden, in exchange for her promissory note, payable after the wedding, for a sum of generous proportions. The negotiations had hardly been concluded when the sound of a horse coming rapidly down the lane started them both, and Lady Lillian, raising her hand warningly, motioned for him to go. It was not a moment too soon, for the signor had scarcely glided into the shrubbery, when Lord Heron rode up. "I am late," he said, flinging the bride over his arm and raising her hand to his lips. "Mrs. Hartly was taken ill, and I rode round for the doctor. How well you are looking to-night, Lillian," he broke off, with great admiration. "Am I?" she said, leaning her head against his shoulder. "Because I am flushed? I have been asleep, I think, Heron; tired out with waiting for you, sir! And Mrs. Hartly is ill? I am so sorry! Don't go round to the stables, until you have told me all about it," she added, caressingly, for her keen eyes could see the signor slinking across the path which Lord Heron would take on his way to the yard."

CHAPTER XXX. THE STOLEN WILL.

Lady Lillian had never been more charming than she was this evening, and certainly Heron Coverdale would have been amazed if any one had told him that in the breast of the beautiful woman, who talked so wittily and laughed so lightly, there lurked a fearful anxiety, and all the carking worry of suspense. As for himself, he usually played the Heron's part when they were together, and seemed content as ordinarily to limit himself to all these minute attentions which a well-bred man is permitted to pay to his betrothed. Rather earlier than usual, he looked at his watch, and said that he must go. "Go soon, my Heron, you seem to have been with me only five minutes," she murmured, putting her hand to the solitaire stud in his shirt front, and leaning her head against his shoulder; but she carefully refrained from pressing him to stay. It would be all the better that the coast should be quite clear for her fellow-conspirator, and that Lord Heron should be safe home at the Revels. For all she knew, the man might be lurking about the Priory grounds at that moment. "I am sorry to go so early, Lillian," he said; "but I am anxious about poor Mrs. Hartly; she has been an old servant of—of the place for some time, you know." He did not add, "and a devoted adherent of Iris Knighthon's."

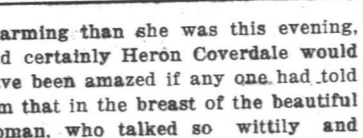


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On his return to the Revels, he found that Mrs. Hartly was better. As the hour was comparatively early and the night remarkably fine, he did not feel like staying indoors, so he lit a cigar, and turning through the great stone gateway that headed the stable-court, he went into the garden. Though he had just left Lady Lillian, and though he endeavored to think of her, and her only, Iris was haunting him to-night. He pictured her walking by his side in the sweet-scented alleys between the lilacs; he pictured her on the terrace; in the drawing-room. And it was not she, but another, who would thus walk by his side for the rest of his life! With a sigh, he turned towards the walled garden, scarcely knowing or caring which direction he took, and laid his hand upon the door which led into it, when he saw, or fancied he saw, a tall figure coming along toward him under the shadow of the wall. At first he thought he must be mistaken, but the moon shone out clearly at the moment, and he saw quite plainly that it was really a man. Lord Heron was standing in the deep shadow cast by the wall, and a tree that grew against it, and with something too faint to be called curiosity, he drew still further back and waited. The man came along very much like a cat, keeping as close to the wall as possible, and stooping a little. His head was lowered, and Lord Heron could not see his face for a while; but presently he raised it, and Lord Heron saw that it was Ricardo. "He was so astonished for the moment as to be incapable of movement, and Ricardo, reaching the door, was so close to him that he might have touched him. When he had recovered from his momentary surprise, Heron was going to seize him by the collar, but suddenly it occurred to him that he might be able to ascertain the signor's motive in spying an evening visit to the Revels, and Heron pressed as close as he could to the tree and watched the intruder. (To be continued.)"

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Such goods as flour, oats, beef, pork, sugar and other bulk goods will need careful watching as it is on such goods that most losses are made. Receiving a few pounds too little and giving a few pounds too many have put the shutters up on many a grocery shop.
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