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ALL FOR LOVE.

CHAPTER XIII. THE MEETING.

(Concluded.)
When Philip entered the music room there was not a sound to be heard, but he saw a graceful girl standing in a drooping attitude before a great window, gazing out upon the moon-flooded ocean beyond. She turned as she caught the sound of his step, and an expression of bewilderment mingled with dismay swept over the intruder's face as his glance fell upon her.

"I beg your pardon," he faltered. "I am looking for Miss Russell."

Beth smiled affably, even though she barely arrested a startled exclamation on beholding him.

"I am Miss Russell," she replied with cordial courtesy.

"You!—you—are—My Lady Beth," stammered Philip incredulously, while he stared in utter amazement at her, for the vision of loveliness before him was none other than the lady whom he had rescued from the "hands of the Philistine" a few weeks previous, and whom he had also seen at the station that afternoon.

A hot wave of scarlet surged up over Beth's throat and face at the sound of that old familiar name, with a certain strange new tone vibrating through the words. She also had been taken entirely off her guard upon finding, in the mysterious knight who had befriended her in Boston the Philip of long ago. But with an heroic effort she almost immediately recovered her poise, when, drawing herself up slightly, she responded with no less courtesy than before, if a trifle coldly:

"Yes, I am Elizabeth Russell, who was but a child when you went away to Japan so long ago, so it is not strange that you did not recognize me; while, until this moment, I did not dream that you were Philip Walton. You also are changed. But," she added, moving toward him with frankly extended hand, "I bid you a hearty welcome home."

Philip grasped the proffered hand in a warmer clasp than he was aware of, while he intently studied her face. He was not thinking, at that moment, of the loyal little friend of his youth, but of the charming girl toward whom he had been so strangely attracted in Boston, and whom he had been yearning, ever since, to meet again. Now he had found her, and how beautiful she was, in her mistlike evening gown of embroidered lace, through which her neck and arms shone white as milk; with her crown of rich brown hair, and her great sapphire eyes which were raised to his in smiling greeting. Her only ornament was an aigrette of pearls and diamonds, but, from its tips to the toe of her white satin boots, just peeping out beneath her trailing skirts, she was a dream of loveliness.

And this was Beth! My Lady Beth, he had called her, and at that moment he knew with a great heart-throb of joy that she would henceforth be the lady of his heart forever and forever. Then he grew suddenly limp as he released the hand she was trying to withdraw, and remembered why he had come to seek her—to remind her of those ruthless words which, uttered in a moment of passion, had wounded her so cruelly years ago.

"I thank you," he managed to say, with some semblance of composure, in response to her greeting. "It is very pleasant to find my old friends so cordial. But, now that I begin to trace some familiar lines in your face, I am wondering why something did not tell me, the other day, who you were."

So he was beginning to trace familiar lines in her face. Beth felt an icy chill creeping down her spine. Hadn't she been as successful as she had imagined in remodeling her obnoxious pug nose? Had he detected a gleam of that detested red in her hair which, in certain lights, still betrayed a hint of the old color? At all events, there were no freckles left to mar her flawless complexion, and she could hold the "abominable temper" pretty well in hand now-days. But she would, by no means, not tell me, the other day, who you were."

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Mrs. Campbell.

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allow him to suspect the trend of her thoughts; so, calling her most alluring smile to her lips, she vivaciously replied:

"And I, too, am wondering, now that I find myself talking with you here, that I did not recognize you. How strange that we should have met that day in Boston. I went up just to shop a little and spend a couple of days with a friend. And how are your interesting little friends getting on? Papa has written me all about that tragic incident and its results. Isn't it nice of Aunt Prue to open her heart and home to them? Dear auntie, she always had a heart of pure gold."

"Yes, indeed, Miss Russell is a grand woman with a heart full of charity," Philip cordially responded. "And my little friends, as you call them, arrived safely at the farm yesterday afternoon about five-thirty. Miss Russell wired me at my request, and I feel very comfortable to have them so nicely settled for the summer; for I know that she will not only build them up physically, but train them morally as well."

"I am very curious to see them," said Beth; "especially Zieba, and I am sure there must be some good in Nathan, in spite of my disagreeable experience with him. His devotion to his sister is certainly unusual. It was absolutely heroic in him to try to shield her with his own body at the time of the accident, and, though seriously wounded himself, make no complaint until exhausted nature took her revenge. Oh, I think I hear Muriel coming down. Shall we go in the other room so you can meet her before the guests arrive? I want to introduce you to my friend, Agnes Baldwin, also."

Beth was beginning to feel the strain of trying to appear perfectly at ease, when every nerve in her body was quivering from the shock of this unexpected meeting, and, as she ceased speaking, she made a move to lead the way to the library.

But Philip detained her. "One moment please," he said in a low voice. "I must tell you why I came to seek you here just now. It was to make my peace with you, if that be possible."

"Your peace," interposed Beth in a startled tone. "Yes, I am sure you know what I mean, but it is only since my return that I have learned why my little old-time friend refused to bid me farewell when I went away to Japan; why she would not answer my letters, accept my photograph, or send me one of herself; but I know now that she overheard that cruel, rash speech I made to Ted under the old beech tree—"

"You know that!" breathed Beth, with white lips and startled eyes. "How could you?"

"Teddy saw you in the tree just as he turned to follow me from the place—"

"Oh!"

CHAPTER XIII. PHILIP'S PLEADING.

Indignation, shame, and pain seemed to struggle for supremacy in this exclamation. Then Beth resolutely pulled herself together. "And Teddy has known it all these years, and never told you?" she demanded, beginning to understand some things in connection with their mutual friend that had always puzzled her.

"Never a word, My Lady Beth, until I landed here a month ago. He has kept the secret most loyally, hoping that you would eventually outgrow the wound, and I should be saved the mortification of ever knowing how I had hurt you. But after receiving your letter, on the day of my arrival, I began to surmise there might be some hitherto unsuspected reason for your apparent indifference and—and repulsion, and I asked him some pertinent questions that cornered him, and made him feel it might be best to tell me the truth."

"I have no extenuating excuses to offer for myself," he gravely resumed, after a slight pause. "The more I think of it, the more unpardonable such a disloyal fling appears to me, in spite of what had occurred to arouse me to such a pitch that morning. I was heartbroken because I had to go to Japan, leave my school and all my friends, and yet I could not remain behind and be separated from my father. Then my cousin,

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Jack Bradford, who was always nagging me, had twitted me unmercifully that morning about Miss Crawford's will, its obligations, and tempting reward. Even your father had tried to comfort me, in his humorous way, telling me to cheer up, ten years would soon pass, then I'd have to come back to get my fortune; and when Teddy broke loose on the same subject, I allowed the accumulated rage and pain, with which I was bursting, to culminate in that thoughtless, heartless speech, which so wounded the most loyal little friend a boy ever had. What can I say—what can I do—to prove to you Lady Beth, that that passionate ebullition was simply the flash of heat-lightning without a malicious thought behind it?"

He was in deadly earnest. His face was very pale, his eyes deeply troubled, as they searched the beautiful face before him, which was almost as colorless as his own; for Beth had also been upon the rack while he was speaking. Every word he had uttered had taken her back to that dreadful hour in the old beech, when that unexpected bolt had burned so deeply into her childish soul. But with her innate courage and spirit of self-abnegation she told herself that she must not add to his humiliation and misery, by allowing him to realize how those cruel words had rankled in her heart during all these years, and even now

burned hotly. She put a curb upon herself, lifted her head, and smiled brightly up into his face.

"That is all past, Philip—a childish happening of the long ago. Let us put it behind us and never speak of it again," she said, in a friendly tone. "And you forgive it?" he persisted eagerly.

"Aren't you making a great deal more of that youthful episode than is necessary?" she questioned lightly. "No," he gravely returned; "and there is no sacrifice I would not make if I could efface the memory of it from both your consciousness and my own. But you have not yet said that you forgive me."

Beth's heart was very heavy. She could say she forgave him, and say it truthfully, in so far that she would treasure no ill will against him on account of it; but she knew that no such assurance would annihilate the pain that had been her bosom companion for so many years. But he must never know this; she would not add a single pang to what he had already suffered. So, calling her brightest smile to her aid, she frankly replied:

"I certainly do, if you must have the assurance. And now let us go to Muriel. I am sure she will wonder what has become of you."

He studied her face for a moment with a sense of growing depression, as he thought perhaps he had made too much of that old affair if she could pass it over lightly. Nevertheless, he responded gratefully:

"I thank you, Lady Beth; and now, even though you are kinder than I deserve, I want to beg that you will allow me once more to number myself among your friends. To forgive is to give back what has been forfeited, you know."

"I should be very sorry if I could not number you among my friends," Beth returned sweetly, but with a rising flush. "Now let me tell you how much I appreciate the inestimable kindness you have shown papa. I have no adequate words to thank you for that. I believe your help in this time of great need has given him a new lease of life."

"Do not speak of it. It has been my privilege, and just the opening for myself that I wanted," Philip replied, with an inward pang to have her slip so easily away from the main subject.

(To be Continued.)

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