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# One in a Thousand, BUT TRUE TO THE LAST

CHAPTER XIV.  
LASSELLES' DEATH.

In a few hours after the arrival of the telegram, announcing the death of Lasselles, Adrian and I are speeding toward London as fast as the express can carry us.

"I wonder if it was an accident?" I say, in an awe-stricken voice.

"I should think so; it must have been very sudden," says Adrian. "Evidently, he was all right when Theo wrote to Loys, two days ago."

"Oh, Adrian," I cry, shivering and creeping more closely to his side, "it is horrible! I can't believe it!"

"No, poor fellow; it's almost incredible. Theo is very young to be a widow."

"Very—only twenty—and with two little children. Well, it is a good thing they are rich, isn't it?"

As is generally the case in times of sudden bereavement, I forgot that Theo and I have been other than the tender sisters we were in childhood. As there are many gaping wounds healed beside an open grave, and an enemy must indeed be a bitter one which can resist a softening influence at such seasons. So it is with my heart filled with tenderest love and pity that I step out upon the platform at the Waterloo Station. Theo's footman is on the lookout for us, and Adrian asks if Lord Lasselles' death was due to an accident.

"Oh, no, sir!" is the man's reply. "My lord was eating his breakfast as usual this morning; and, just as I handed his cup to him, he clutched hold of the table, and said: 'Oh, great Heaven!' and leaned forward. I lifted him up, and Simpkins, the butler that is, says: 'Why, my lord, says he, 'what is it?' But he was stone dead—stone dead before my lady could get round from the other side of the table."

"Was Lady Lasselles there?" I ask, in a horrified tone.

"Oh, yes, my lady! They were just beginning breakfast."

"And how is she?" says Adrian.

"Well, my lady was very quiet all through," is the man's answer, "and the maid told me this evening that she sat very still all day, almost without saying a word. But the woman are in great trouble about the little lord, for he's cried for 'dassie' all day. I went up into the nursery to see if he'd come to me, but he wouldn't; it was 'Dassie, dassie—me want dassie!' till I couldn't stop any longer." And then he shuts the carriage door and turns away as if he could not trust himself to say another word.

Theo's maid meets me in the hall. "Will you come this way, my lady?" she says, in a hushed voice.

So I follow her up the broad staircase, and she stops at the door of Theo's room, and, having knocked, she opens it, and I enter. Theo is sitting in a low chair before the fire, and rises when she sees me. I rush to her impulsively and take her into my arms.

"My poor, dear Theo!" I say, tearfully.

But, to my intense astonishment, Theo says, calmly:

"There, there; that will do, Audrey."

I have not calculated on such a reception as this. I draw myself away and sit down on the edge of a chair, and wish myself anywhere but where I am. Theo lies back in her chair and makes no attempt to speak; and though I feel something is expected of me, I cannot think of anything to say. At last I remark stupidly that we were very much shocked when we heard the news, and that it was awfully sudden.

"Very," says Theo; "but don't talk about it. It was all very horrible, and it does no good to talk about it. Of course you've heard everything from the servants."

I feel that no other topic will be acceptable, so sit in uncomfortable silence, and wish Adrian and I had not hurried up to town so soon. Then Theo says that, if I go down, I shall find supper in the dining room, and that perhaps I will excuse her seeing me again to-night. So I kiss her and go, to find Adrian waiting for me. He tells the servants that they need not wait, and, when we are alone, asks if Theo is much upset.

"Not a bit," I answer; "she's just as cool and composed as ever she was, and won't say a word about it." "Stunned," suggests Adrian.

"Well, perhaps. You will see for yourself to-morrow," I say, calmly; "but I never saw such a widow in all my life."

In the morning Loys comes, and comes alone, for Teddy cannot be spared. She has left the baby for the first time, and is anxious accordingly. After that, people are coming all day—Lady Lasselles the elder, and Rose and Edith, both full of all kinds of warnings they have had during the past week. Theo sees them for a few minutes, but keeps to her own rooms and requests that she may not be disturbed. In the afternoon Loys and I find our way up to the nurseries, where the two little children are. Loys seizes the baby instantly to its evident satisfaction, while I make overtures to the little viscount by asking him if he will not come to auntie. But the little man only shakes his head, and says, fretfully, "Me want dassie."

I do not know much about children and I am perplexed what to say to him. I do not like to tell him that his "dassie" has gone away—he would not understand if I say he is dead. I look at the head nurse imploringly.

"He was like that all yesterday my lady, she says, in answer to the look. 'My lord was very fond of him; and always, when he was in the house, he was up here, or Master Derrick was downstairs with him. And, when he fretted for him we had orders always to send for my lord if he was anywhere near. Indeed I've known him to come up from a dinner party if Master Derrick cried for him.'"

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## Had Itching Piles For 27 Years

"Poor little man!" I say, while the tears fall from Loys' eyes onto the baby's golden hair.

The subject of our conversation looks in a bewildered fashion from one face to another; then, with a sigh so big that you wonder it could have come out of so small a body, he says:

"Me want dassie."

"I wonder if he would take to Sir Adrian?" I say, at last.

"I think not, my lady. We sent for Burrows yesterday afternoon, but he wouldn't look at him, and Simpkins came up last night, but it was of no use; he just cried himself to sleep."

"You should have sent for Lady Lasselles," says Loys.

"For my lady?" questions the woman. "Oh, no, ma'am; we never trouble my lady."

Loys looks at me and says nothing. I lift the boy onto my knee and smooth his bonnie, golden-curly. He puts one tiny hand upon my dress, which is of velvet, and says: "Dassie!" I look at the nurse for explanation.

"My lord often came up in his smoking suit," she says, "and it was of velvet."

An idea crosses my mind. I left Adrian in his dressing room, and he had on a velvet coat.

"Will Derry go downstairs with auntie?" I ask.

He says "Yes," so I carry him down, and find Adrian writing letters. "If you'll dictate, I'll write those," I tell him. "I want you to make friends with the boy."

"All right," he says, cheerfully. "Come here, Derry, and look at my watch."

A good deal to my surprise, Derry goes straight to him, without murmur or complaint of any kind, and, after exhausting the mysteries of the watch, looks round at me, and, in a tone of the utmost satisfaction, says: "Big man."

So there we stay all the afternoon I soon finish the letters; and, when it is nearly dark, Theo's maid comes to say that Lady Lasselles will be glad if I will go to her. I find her exactly in the same attitude, as yesterday sitting back in a low chair, with idly clasped hands, and, as quietly composed in face and manner as if Lasselles had gone to Scotland for a week's shooting.

"How are you to-day, Theo?" I ask, for I must say something, and in my nervousness, I cannot think of anything else.

"Very much as usual, thank you," answers Theo, calmly. "What have you been doing all day?"

"This afternoon I have been writing letters for Adrian," I answer.

"Oh, yes! is he out?"

"No; he is in the dressing room. Jerry is with him."

"Oh, Lasselles, you mean?" I shiver to hear her call the boy by his little while his father still lies dead in the house. "Who took him in here? Surely there are servants enough to look after him, without Adrian being troubled."

"Adrian does not find him a trouble," I answer, coldly. "And I took him in there because he has been retreating for his father since yesterday."

"Really! Ah, he's a very tiresome child, and Lasselles' utterly ruined him! I never could see the good myself of giving way to the whims and caprices of a baby of that age."

I do not answer this at all. I do not know much about children, and so it is of no use attempting any argument with Theo on the subject. Besides, for decency's sake, I do not want any disagreements just now. Presently she breaks the silence, and asks why Adrian has not been to see her.

"I think he was afraid of intruding," I answer.

"Oh, it won't be intruding at all! It's very dull here; but I prefer being by myself to having to endure all the noisy grief I have no doubt Lasselles' people are indulging in. You might go and send him here; will you?"

I do not like to say "No," though I know Adrian would rather not go; but I have to submit, and kiss my sister's cheek meekly ere I leave the room.

"She wants you to go and see her," I say, when I return to the dressing room.

As I expected, Adrian pulls a long

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