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The Lost Will; OR, LOVE TRIUMPHS AT LAST.

CHAPTER XXV.

In some cases a woman's wit—or is it her imagination?—is keener than a man's. Nora's brows knit together and she pondered. She had been told of the finding of Mr. Chalfont sitting dead in his chair. She was trying to picture the small incidents preceding that death. She looked up suddenly.

"I think I know," she said, speaking very slowly, her eyes fixed on vacancy, as if she were visualising her imaginary scene. "Mr. Chalfont meant to put the will in the safe. He had it in his hand; he must have felt suddenly ill, weak and giddy. The will must have dropped from his hand on to the top of the safe, and a sudden draught of air from the window—it blows very hard into this room sometimes—must have wafted it into the narrow crevice between the wall and the safe. Or," she continued, musingly, "a servant, reaching up to dust the top of the safe, might have swept the will into the crack, and been too frightened to tell what she had done."

"It may have been so," said Mr. Horton, biting at his under-lip. "We shall never know. I blame myself most bitterly, for not having the safe removed. Everything else in the room was cleared out, every chair, every piece of furniture was examined carefully. It never occurred to me that the will could have been hidden behind the safe. There seemed to be no motive to account for Mr. Chalfont's concealing it."

"Well, it doesn't matter," said Nora, with a shrug. "I don't think you have any cause to blame yourself. No one would have thought of it. But now, Mr. Horton, you see that I was right, and I want to tell you that I am not sorry—I mean, that the right will has been found."

"Not sorry!" he repeated, almost irritably. "But do you realise that this—he struck the will with his finger—deprives you of everything?"

"Oh, yes," responded Nora cheerfully. "I have had time to think it over, you know. Oh, don't cry, dear!" She turned to Mrs. Feltham, and put her arm round her. "Any one would think, by the way you two take it, that I had been sentenced to death. Of course, I know I'm poor again, and I'm not so foolish as not to under-

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stand what that means; but you must remember that I'm used to poverty, brought up in it. All my life, until lately, I've known that I'd have to get my own living, and there wasn't anything very dreadful in the thought. There isn't now. Another thing—I'm obliged to tell you—I've never been quite easy during this time of affluence and luxury." She laughed. "I've always had a feeling that I was a kind of jay dressed in peacock's plumes. And more," she added gravely, "I have always felt that I was standing in the place which Mr. Jack Chalfont should have occupied, that I was a kind of robber, usurper."

She paused for a moment or two, then she went on, in a lower voice: "That will which was made by Mr. Chalfont in my favour was made on the night he saw my father. My father thought Mr. Chalfont had injured him. I do not know what passed between them, but I have felt that my father may have threatened Mr. Chalfont, forced him to make the will. Oh, I know what you are going to say—that I accepted the will. Yes; but there was no one else, and Mr. Jack Chalfont would have refused—did refuse—to take a penny. Now that it is his by right—Oh, I can give it all up quite cheerfully."

"But my dear, you are forgetting—you are forgetting Lord Ferndale, the man you are going to marry," murmured Mrs. Feltham.

The colour rose to Nora's face, and her eyes were downcast.

"I am not going to marry him," she said, in a low voice. "I am going to write to tell him so—at once."

"Lord Ferndale will not accept his dismissal," said Mrs. Feltham.

"Yes, I think he will," said Nora almost inaudibly. "But we won't talk of that." She turned to Mr. Horton. "Mr. Horton, of course you will let Mr. John Chalfont know?"

Horton, who had been leaning against the mantelshelf, with his hand gripping his forehead, gave a short, grim laugh.

"Certainly I should—if I knew where to find him. He has left London—England very probably. I've been wanting to see him on my own account, and I can find no trace of him."

"You said it would be quite easy to find Stephen Fleming," Nora flashed upon him. "Surely it would be just as easy to find Mr. Chalfont. I should like him to be told at once. It isn't fair that he should be kept out of his fortune another moment. I have kept it from him too long," she added bitterly.

"Pray don't say so foolish a thing!" Mr. Horton adjured her. "You are absolutely innocent in this matter, Miss Norton. Can either of you give me any clue to Mr. Chalfont's whereabouts?"

Mrs. Feltham shook her head and sighed. Nora was silent; then suddenly, with her face crimson, she said:

"I think—perhaps—if you found Maud Delman, she might give you some information."

"Maud Delman!" echoed Mr. Horton, with upraised brows. "You think—?"

"I think she might be able to tell you," said Nora coldly. "Her mother could give you her address, I dare say. Come, Mabel, let us give Mr. Horton some tea. Perhaps when he has had some he will feel less angry, and be able to forgive me."

At this gentle reproof Mr. Horton shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands apologetically.

"My dear Miss Norton, there is a general impression that we lawyers have no hearts. I am sorry to say that it is a mistaken one. Sorry, because we should get through our business much more easily. If you expect me to feel no regret at this sudden change in your fortunes—well, I'm

afraid you expect too much. Yes, I'll have a cup of tea; but I'll take it just now, for, of course, I must go up to London at once."

Nora gave him his tea, and displayed so marked a cheerfulness—indeed, a manner so nearly approaching gaiety—that Mr. Horton threatened to grow angry indeed, and took himself off speedily in a condition which is commonly described as a "huff."

When he had gone Mrs. Feltham turned a troubled countenance to Nora.

"I am so terribly upset, dear, that I can scarcely think," she said tremulously, and pressing her hand to her forehead. "Is it really true, not a figure of speech, that you have no money, no money at all?"

"Nary cent," replied Nora. "Do you know any one amongst your aristocratic friends who wants a companion, who would like to have a healthy, fairly good-tempered, and absolutely uneducated girl as a companion, nursery governess, or caretaker for her dogs?"

As she spoke, she pressed Jim's smooth head against her knee.

"Now, don't be wicked and absurd," Nora, pleaded Mrs. Feltham, the tears springing to her eyes. "Of course, you know that what I have in yours, I am not well-off, but I've quite enough for two women who are content to live quietly. We'll take a little flat. Besides, you don't think that Jack—"

She hesitated.

Nora's hand closed tightly on Jim's head, causing him to look up with astonishment, her face grew scarlet, and there was an angry light in her eyes.

"Oh, what were you going to say?" she demanded. "Whatever it was, don't say it. Oh, of course, I know what you meant; but do you think—"

Besides—she laughed, with returning good temper—"you forget that when I offered Mr. Chalfont—well, what you were going to suggest he would offer me—he refused, with scorn. I've just as much pride as he has."

"Oh, forgive me, dearest!" murmured poor Mrs. Feltham, almost frightened by the passion of pride Nora had tried to mask. "We won't say any more about it. Now let's plan the whole thing out. Do you know those dear little flats facing the river at Battersea? I've often longed to have one; but, of course, I dreaded living alone. But now I shall have you."

"So you shall—for a time, dear," said Nora. "We'll live together, two happy old maids, with a cat and a canary."

Mrs. Feltham's hand stole out and sought the girl's.

"You won't be an old maid long, dear," she said.

"Ah, don't make any mistake about that!" said Nora, with sudden gravity. "What I said just now—about Lord Ferndale—I meant. It wasn't only the loss of my fortune; it was

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PEPS

She paused a moment, then she turned her head and looked steadily at Mrs. Feltham. "Mabel, it was a mistake. I did it without thinking, and it was not until after I'd done it and had time to think that I discovered I—did not love him. I know now that sooner or later I should have had to tell him that I could not marry him. Let's take a turn in the park; we shan't have many more opportunities."

Strange to say, she made the assertion with a cheerfulness which was absolutely genuine.

When Lord Ferndale came to the Hall the next morning, Nora was waiting for him in the library. He saw, by the expression on her face, by her tense attitude as she stood by the table, pressing one hand against it, that something had happened; for Nora's face and form possessed that peculiar expressiveness which sometimes renders words unnecessary.

"Is anything the matter?" he asked, going to her and taking her hand, and his face grew pale as he noticed how unresponsive was the firm hand.

"Yes," she said, in a low voice, full of sympathy, of regret, and of remorse. "I have found a will which gives all this property, money, to Mr. Chalfont."

He looked surprised, and raised his dark brows; but his eyes dwelt upon her expectantly, as a man waits for a second and harder blow.

"That is bad news for you," he said. "But—that is not all you are going to tell me? Your face is an easy one to read."

She turned her eyes away for a moment, then she said:

"I wish to break our engagement, Lord Ferndale."

He was silent for quite a long time, his eyes still dwelling on her; then he said, in a low voice which he kept steady:

"Because of the loss of this money?"

You know that, much as I regret it, for both our sakes, it would have made no difference. But it is absurd to utter such an assertion. We should have been poor, but—Will you tell me what else there is for me to know?"

"It is not only because of the loss of the money," she said, with downcast eyes. "There is another reason."

"Lord Ferndale!" he echoed, almost inaudibly.

"I have behaved very badly, very heartlessly to you, and it is no excuse that I did not realise how wickedly I was behaving. It seems childish to say that I did not know my own mind when I promised to be your wife, and yet it is true. You were so good, so kind; I admired you so much and honoured you so greatly. And there was Lady Blanche. It was so easy to love her, to want to be something near and dear to her. Oh, but I know it is of no use to try to explain, to urge excuses; I have behaved very badly, and I can only ask you, with all humility and grief, to forgive me."

Ferndale was not a young man. He had had a bitter experience of women and the world. He knew that this girl was speaking the truth, and that the truth was irrevocable. He went to the window and looked out, with the misery and bitterness in his heart showing plainly in the face which, with true nobility, he concealed from her; for he knew that she was suffering acutely, and he did not want to add to her punishment. He heard a sob, and turning quickly, went towards her, but checked himself before he reached the chair into which she had sunk.

(To be Continued.)

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A good salad is grapes and pecan nuts on lettuce with French dressing.

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Turkey

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY 1,000 Prisoners Allied Fleets---

WAR REVIEW.

Turkey is out of the war and Germany's remaining ally, Austria-Hungary, badly defeated on the field of battle, her battle line rent in twain, with chaos reigning inside her borders, is pleading for an armistice.

So far her opportunities have been no better answer than the rebuffing of the efforts of the Allies' crush utterly her warriors. The situation of Turkey is believed to have been an unconditional one. The stories of the Allied forces over the Eastern front remain of the enemy's armies being completely vanquished, and 50,000 prisoners have been taken by the Italians, British, French, American and Czech-Slovak forces, everywhere from the mountain peaks to the plains of Venetia the enemy is being sorely tried. In the mountains where stiff resistance had been offered to keep the foe from entering the back door of Austria, the enemy's front is cracking under the pressure of the attacks and important strategic positions are being lost. To the west of the Piave the Allies have won in a sharp wedge to the north of Belluno, some twenty miles. This in their original point of departure, and severed connections between the Austrian armies in the north and those on the Venetian plains. Over the frontier of the Isonzo River, the invaders everywhere are in full flight with their troops pressing them hard, and the debacle seems to be complete. The enemy in his flight is leaving behind him large quantities of war material as he endeavours to reach passages over the Tagliamento river. It seems not improbable that the plains and in the region, east and west of Belluno, large numbers of the enemy are destined to be captured. On the western battle front there is still little fighting of a violent character, but the intensive operations of the armies seem to presage the early return of battles of major importance. In Belgium both the British and Belgians have made slight gains while the French on the western part of the line in France have advanced their line and taken prisoners. Aside from reciprocal artillery duels and continued aerial maneuvers by the Americans and Germans in the American sectors east and west of the Meuse have been comparatively quiet.



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