



The Web;

TRUE LOVE'S PASSION.

CHAPTER XII.

The First Kiss of Love.

"It is a poor guerdon," she said, with a flickering smile that seemed to make her face more serious. "It is all dusty and faded."

"I would rather have it than the freshest and finest!" he said, fervently and his eyes wandered wistfully from the rose to her face.

Slowly she took the flower—it was dusty and faded—from her belt and held it out to him, standing with downcast face.

He took the rose and pressed it to his lips; then, carried away by the thought that she had worn it, feeling that it was, so to speak, part and parcel of herself that she had given him, he took her hand, and, bending over it, kissed it passionately.

Norah went white to the lips. It was her hand only he had kissed, but it was the first kiss of love, and it stirred her maiden heart to its depths.

With a long breath she thrilled throughout her whole being, and stood looking at him, half fearfully, wholly entranced.

He looked up at her, his face almost as white as hers.

"Ah, forgive me!" he murmured, remorsefully. "Forgive me! I—I did not think! I—ah, you would not be angry, you would forgive me if you understood, if you knew how I love you!"

She shrank back slightly, and drawing her hand away, pressed it unconsciously against her heart.

"Ah, I've said it!" he murmured desperately, as if he saw that he had lost her forever, but that it was useless to try and recall his words. "I love you, Lady Norah, I love you! Don't speak to me yet! You are angry, offended! I have behaved badly! I ought not to have said it! But—"

A sound broke the silence of the night. It was the opening of the great door. He stopped, and Norah, with a start, looked toward the house. Two figures stood plainly revealed against the light in the hall.

Cyril raised his head and passed his hand over his forehead.

"Lady Norah," he said, in a voice that was scarcely audible, "don't cast me off until you have seen me, heard me—"

He could say no more.

They had gone up the steps, and stood before the earl and Guildford Berton.

Guildford Berton darted a dark look under his brows at each of them in turn, then dropped his eyes and stood with tightly-drawn lips in sinister silence. The earl regarded them with haughty surprise on his cold face, and in a tone of ice, disregarding his daughter's presence, said:

"Mr. Burne! To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?"

Norah put her hand on his arm to stop him.

"Papa!" she said, hurriedly, "there has been an accident! Lady Fernale's horses ran away, and the carriage was upset, and Mr. Burne—"

she stopped a moment for breath.

"Mr. Burne stopped the horses at great peril."

The earl calmly took her hand and removed it from his arm.

"Excuse me," he said, coldly. "Do I understand that Mr. Burn has rendered you a service?"

Norah's face went crimson, and she stole a pleading glance to where Cyril stood perfectly calm and at his ease.

"Yes, yes," she said, "Mr. Burne stopped the horses—the two great horses—think, papa!—and, her voice grew lower, and was meant for his ear alone, "and he is hurt!"

The earl's face did not soften in the slightest.

"That Mr. Burne is hurt I very much regret," he said, stiffly, "and I trust that the injury is not a serious one. Where did you—er—leave the carriage? I do not see it?"

"The carriage is a wreck, papa," said Norah, almost distracted at his coldness and ingratitude. "We left it in the lane!"

"And you have taxed Mr. Burne's kindness to the extent of accompanying you home!" said the earl, in a tone of rebuke, intended as much for Cyril as for herself. "Why did you not send one of the servants here for a carriage?"

"I did not think—there was no time! Oh, papa," she broke off under her breath, "are you not going to thank him for all he has done?"

The earl shot a glance at her of suppressed anger.

"I trust Mr. Burne will do me the justice to acknowledge that I have attempted to thank him in my poor way."

"No thanks are needed, my lord," said Cyril, quietly. "I am afraid Lady Norah puts far too high value on the poor service I was fortunate to render her. I was lucky enough to be passing at the moment of the accident, that is

all. I trust Lady Norah is not hurt. It was I who should have thought of sending for a carriage, but there were difficulties in the way. I sent one man with the horses, and the other was left with the carriage. I wish you good-night, my lord. Good-night, Lady Norah," and he raised his hat.

Norah stood, her face white and red by turns; her father's coldness and hauteur filled her with shame; she was tingling from head to foot.

"Papa, papa!" she murmured, almost piteously.

"Will you not step in, Mr. Burne?" said the earl, completely disregarding her.

But Cyril declined to "step in."

"No, thank you, my lord," he said, with well-bred ease, and was turning to go, when Norah held out her hand suddenly.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you!" she said, slowly, her large eyes full of emotion, as if she meant to make up for her father's shortcomings.

Cyril took her hand and pressed it, and with a bow that included the earl and Guildford Berton, turned and went down the steps. The great door closed behind him. He walked down the drive nearly to the lodge, then stopped suddenly and sat down.

He had ignored and made light of his hurts while Norah had been with him, but now the pain in his arm was so acute that he felt giddy and sick from it.

He leaned against the smooth-shaven bank of turf, and tried to feel the injured limb, but he could scarcely bear the touch of his own fingers.

Was he going to be idiot enough to faint, he thought. Angry at the idea, he struggled to his feet, thinking he would reach the lodge and ask for a glass of water; but the lodge and the trees and the sky executed a peculiar kind of dance before his eyes, and he fell back on the bank.

He had lain there in delicious unconsciousness for a couple of minutes, when Becca South came through the gate. She was walking with a light, careful step, as if she wished to avoid attracting the attention of the people at the lodge, and her pink dress flitted like an overgrown moth against the dark trees.

She saw Cyril, and stopped with a little cry of alarm, then cautiously and fearfully approached him.

"Why, it's the painter gentleman!" she exclaimed, with a surprise which intensified as she saw how motionless Cyril lay. At first she thought—well, Becca thought that he was intoxicated, and she grew alarmed when, bending over him, she saw that he had fainted.

Her first idea was to run to the lodge and call the keeper, Jobson, to her aid; but she did not do so.

Eve, the mother of us all, was not more curious than her daughter Becca, and Becca's little mind was all agog to discover the reason why the strange gentleman should have fallen down in a fainting fit in the Court avenue.

So she knelt down beside the still form, and with hands that trembled

with excitement, she tried to revive him.

Of course Becca could not understand the latter part of the note, but the earlier made her prick up her ears. The handsome gentleman was not only amusing himself by painting pictures, but getting a hundred pounds for one!

She looked at this with a puzzled could not find any; in fact, there was nothing else to reward her search, but a faded and dusty rose which she found between his waistcoat and his shirt, lying upon his heart, indeed.

She looked at this with a puzzled frown on her warm, classical brow, then with a little smile put it back.

In doing so, she touched his arm, and the pain caused him to come to. His eyes opened, and his lips moved, and Becca, bending down her head, heard him murmur a name:

"Norah!"

Her eyes lighted and her face flushed. She had discovered something, at any rate. This handsome young stranger was in love with her beautiful mistress.

(To be continued.)

The housekeeper with respect for the digestion of the family avoids cooked-over meats.

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WHEN ABBEY'S EFFERVESCENT SALT WILL MAKE YOU SO WELL?

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A little, unfastened his collar, and held her hand, cold and wet with dew from the long grass, upon his forehead.

He looked very handsome, Becca thought, as he lay there, and her black, glittering eyes scanned his face and clothes minutely.

"Has he been fighting?" she asked herself, as she noticed the dust and the rent in his coat.

But there were no marks on the clean-cut, sunburned face, and, still puzzled, Becca thought that perhaps he had been knocked down and robbed.

Burglars and footpads were not of common occurrence in Santeigh, but occasionally tramps passed through, and petty larcenies followed in their trail.

But if he had been knocked down and left for dead, his assailants had left him his watch, for the chain was glittering in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Amateur Physician.

Becca, looking round swiftly, took the watch from his pocket and looked at it. It was a handsome one, with a monogram which puzzled her, and which few persons could have disentangled. She put the watch to her ear, turned the key—Cyril wondered the next day what on earth had come to his first-class lever!—and then put it back in its place. As she did so, she caught sight of an envelope in the breast pocket of his coat. She put her hand in and took it out, and, looking round again warily, read it by the light of the moon. There was not much in it to satisfy her burning curiosity.

"Dear Cyril," it ran, "I found on getting to town that your picture, 'The Reapers,' was making a stir. I always told you that it was just bad and tricky enough to catch the public taste. Moses, the picture dealer, has offered you £80 for it, and I've made bold to ask £100, and will take that sum if I can screw him up to it. Have you recovered from your madness, or is the dogstar still burning. I don't ask you what you are doing, for I know. You are just loafing about, smoking, dreaming, mooning, anything but working. Oh, the brief madness which men call love! Adieu, insane youth."

JACK.

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Statesmen's Soldier Sons.

All "Doing Their Bit" at the Front.

Everyone read with regret of the death in action of Lieutenant Raymond Asquith, of the Grenadier Guards. Being appointed to a commission in the Queen's Westminster Rifles a few months after he was broke out, he soon made himself one of the most popular officers in the regiment, and when he transferred his affection to the Grenadier Guards there was not a member of the "Westminsters" who was not sorry to see him go. He entered into the training with the zest and enthusiasm of a schoolboy, and the writer had on many occasions enjoyed the privilege of leaping over the back of the Prime Minister's son during physical "jerks."

Captain Cyril Asquith, a younger brother of the dead officer, is still serving with the "Westminsters," a battalion which on many occasions distinguished itself in France.

Mr. Asquith is not the only member of the Cabinet who has had the misfortune to lose a son in the war. In the early days of the war, Lord Lansdowne was thrown into mourning by the death of his son, Lord Charles Mercer Nairne. At the time of his bereavement, however, his lordship was not a member of the Coalition Ministry.

It was only a few days after the death of Lieutenant Raymond Asquith that it was announced that one of Mr. Arthur Henderson's sons had been killed in action.

Amongst other Cabinet Ministers whose sons are on active service are Mr. Lloyd George, whose two sons are serving in Welsh units; Mr. Bonar Law, whose son, an officer in the Royal Flying Corps, was wounded some time ago; and Mr. H. J. Tennant, whose son recently sustained a serious accident while flying.

SEA SUBSIDIES.—The heavy sea which practically blocked this port for several days, subsided this morning. A number of schooners from various outports with cargoes of dry codfish were able to enter.

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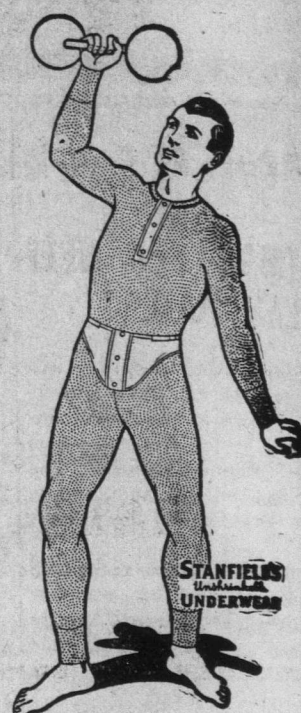
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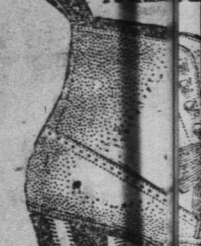
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