

FATED TO LOVE HER

"Of course I shall. I am very fond of him," said Gabrielle, half pensive.

He spoke coldly, and Gabrielle, although she loved him, by no means reassured. She leaned back in the carriage, and wished that she had not mentioned Gabrielle's name.

"I would rather die than go through all that I may have to go through," she thought, with an involuntary shudder.

Half unconsciously, a little tear stole from Gabrielle's eyes and trickled down her cheek. James saw it with a pang of compunction.

"She was sorry when they reached Rotherbridge, rattling noisily through the High Street, in company with a variety of other vehicles—buses, wagons, drays, and milkcarts.

"She watched in veneration, mingled with a thrill of exulting joy that he, to others so indifferent, was so mindful of her. Directly the big space came to be turned to rescue her from the oblation into which she had sunk, introduced her to the hostess, then followed her with his eyes, escorted by one of the daughters, she quitted the room to unroll on returning, she found Olivia, who had arrived during the interim.

"Gabrielle! I am so glad to see you! I must not kiss you here, I suppose. Are you well, dear child?"

"Quite, thank you. How happy you look, Olivia?"

"And ought I not to be happy? James has told you about dear Marian? Is it not delightful? Then James himself—I do love to see him appreciated! He is more handsome than ever this evening—don't you think so, Gabrielle?—with that unusually beautiful expression, and his eyes so bright! Really, sometimes he seems to be almost perfect. Not genius alone, but good looks, a noble air, winning manners—all are his. He is wonderfully gifted, Gabrielle."

room and took a chair at his fair critic's elbow.

"How do you do, Miss Thompson?" Gabrielle heard. "It is some time since I had the honor of meeting you."

"What glorious weather we are having! When do you leave town, so to speak, you forsake old Rotherbridge every summer, I know."

"Yes, we go next Monday."

"I dare say, now, you look forward to it the whole year through."

"I do, indeed!" exclaimed Miss Thompson.

The country was Miss Thompson's hobby, as James was aware. He passed on and led her on to a discussion of country privileges, sympathizing in her tastes, sometimes telling an amusing anecdote which made both girls laugh.

"I wonder what she would say of him now?" thought Gabrielle, resentfully.

"And as he has won there," said a voice in Gabrielle's heart. Was she blind, too?"

The town hall was crowded, chiefly by artisans and shopkeepers; but there was a large minority of other ranks, whom James Gordon's fame had attracted.

"I am glad he's gone," observed Miss Thompson.

that you will do as he said. You will go on and prosper in your glorious aims, and draw others with you."

"They were out, under the stars, by this time. He took her hand, as it rested on his arm, and for a moment held it fast."

"Thank you, Gabrielle," he said. "It was no common 'Thank you,' and Gabrielle treasured it in her heart. The pony carriage was waiting; they drove silently home, through the starlight. So the evening closed."

"It was strange that, despite all his triumph, a vague sense of uneasiness, of something wrong somewhere, troubled in James' heart. At least he thought it strange; he told himself that he had no idea of the cause. But surely his dreams might have enlightened him! For all the night through his pillow was haunted—painfully haunted—by one name, one face. The face was that of a young man—fair-haired, blue-eyed. The name was the name of Charles Godfrey."

In these days Gabrielle's eyes grew larger, brighter; her color, faint before, deepened into carmine; her shyness, her shrinking from society disappeared; her laugh, peculiarly sweet and ringing, was often heard; her countenance shone, as from some inward radiance.

Olivia said that she was developing after her sorrow—as flowers when the winter is past. James said nothing; but his London visit was postponed week by week. He felt lazy, he told Olivia, and disinclined to move. At length, however, an urgent letter, from their married sister, Lady Peers, dispelled his lethargy, and he departed, leaving Olivia and Gabrielle tete-a-tete.

He wrote some ten days later that he had invited a large party to Farnley for August. A shooting party, he called it; but it would comprise several who did not shoot; among them Mrs. Featherstone and the Bion. Gabrielle was sitting alone one morning, drawing mental pictures of Farnley with the house full of people, and feeling sad, she hardly knew why, when a ring at the hall door was followed by the entrance of Wilcox, a gentleman whose name she did not catch. She looked up, in some astonishment, for Olivia was out, and met the familiar smile of Charles Godfrey.

Anxiousness and confusion were alike forgotten. She sprang from her seat with a joyful cry of "Oh, Charles! are you come at last?" and flew toward him. He, no less delighted, embraced her, and in a demonstrative manner, saying over and over again what great happiness it was to see her, to find her well; all the while holding her hand and gazing with pleased scrutiny into her face.

At length the first greetings were over, Charles sat down; and Gabrielle, taking her work, made a pretence of continuing it as they talked—every moment fresh topics arising.

"You are at Lorton, I suppose?" "For five weeks, at least. My aunt means to ask you before long, the house is full just now. I say, Gabrielle," cried Charles, playing a mild game of ball with a reel of cotton from Gabrielle's work box—"I say—how awfully romantic my aunt is!"

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