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**Love a Conqueror
—OR—
WEDDED AT LAST!**

CHAPTER XIII.

Presently the town of Dumfries, quaint and irregular, with its market-places and rather straggling streets, came in view, and an occasional house or cottage was to be seen on the roadside.

Sir Hugh moderated Tippoo's pace, as they entered the town.

"It won't do to attract attention by fast driving," he said, smiling slightly; and Shirley glanced nervously from side to side, dreading to see a face she knew.

But it was not necessary to drive fast, for Sir Hugh's dog-cart to attract attention. The vehicle itself, so perfectly appointed, and the superb horse between its shafts were not likely to pass unnoticed anywhere; nor were its occupants—the fair, splendidly-looking man in his heavily furred driving-coat, and the pale beautiful girl to whom he seemed so devoted, and for whose comfort he was so solicitous. Latrelle, from his seat at the back of the dog-cart, caught many a significant glance as well as many an admiring one cast at his master and Miss Ross as the dog-cart went slowly down the High street leading into the market-place, where Sir Hugh pulled up.

"Have you any idea where the Half-Moon Inn is, Latrelle?" he said, turning round to his servant.

"Yes, Sir Hugh; I made a point of ascertaining. It is the last house on the opposite side of the square; it faces the drinking fountain."

Sir Hugh drove on. It was yet early in the afternoon, and the market-place presented an animated and bustling appearance, for it was market-day. Shirley shrank back, and pulled her veil over her face. Sir Hugh, always watchful, observed the movement.

"It is unfortunate—or perhaps fortunate—for us that it is market-day," he said softly. "It increases the chances of meeting an acquaintance; but it lessens our fears of attracting notice."

Shirley made no answer; she was too nervous and anxious to speak carelessly, and she did not wish to distress him by any agitation. They drove on in silence across the market-place, passed the grotesque drinking fountain which disfigured the corner, and pulled up at a curious old-fashioned house with latticed windows and many gables, and a low wide entrance hall, the door of which stood wide open, while over it was a large representation of a half-moon.

"Here we are!" Sir Hugh said cheerily, as Latrelle got down from his seat and went to the horse's head. "We shall be here for an hour perhaps, so you may as well have Tippoo put up," he added, as he got down himself. "Gently, my little wife!"

He turned to Shirley with a smile and lifted her out of the dog-cart with a care and tenderness that she could not but feel, although she was trembling in every limb and hardly able to stand from excess of agitation. Sir Hugh, seeing her condition, drew her hand through his arm, and led her into the low, broad entrance hall where they were met half way by a cheerful, kindly looking woman with a saucily ribboned cap.

"Good afternoon, sir," she said civilly, but in rather an independent manner. "What can I do for you? I am afraid," she added more gently, as Shirley's trembling fingers pushed up her veil as she gasped for breath, "that the lady is ill."

"My wife is not very strong," said Sir Hugh quietly. "I suppose we can have a private sitting room here for an hour or two?"

"Certainly, sir," the landlady answered promptly. "Although it is market-day, I can accommodate you this way, sir if you please."

"One moment," he said quietly, obeying the slight pressure of the little hand trembling upon his arm. "There a gentleman here waiting for Sir Hugh and Lady Glynn?"

The landlady paused, there was a shade more of deference in her manner as she answered: "There is no gentleman here, sir except our regular customers. Were you expecting—Dear me, sir, her ladyship is very ill!" she added, breaking off suddenly, as she saw Shirley drooped over the strong arm on which she leaned, and the ghastly pallor of the lovely young face.

"It is nothing," Shirley managed to whisper, as Sir Hugh placed her on a chair and the landlady held a glass of water to the quivering lips. "I am better; please leave me—leave me with my husband."

She spoke the words almost unconsciously in her anxiety to be alone for a moment with Sir Hugh, and she did not see the sudden flush of triumph which spread over the handsome face bending over her.

"Will you be kind enough to see that there is a good fire in the sitting room?" Sir Hugh said quietly. "Lady Glynn is very tired, and will be glad to rest. We will follow you in a moment."

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The landlady courtesied and went away, and Shirley turned anxiously to Sir Hugh.

"What has happened? What has kept him?" she said breathlessly. "Do you think there has been any mistake?"

"There has been no mistake, and there is no occasion for such terrible distress, dear child," he answered soothingly. "Your brother may have

been detained, but he will be here shortly. Come—take courage! Poor Jack will be in despair if he thinks that he has given you so much trouble," he added, smiling.

"What can have detained him?" Shirley repeated once or twice; and then she dropped her head on her hands for a moment.

"I am going to post Latrelle as sentry," said Sir Hugh cheerfully. "He must waylay Jack, you know, and tell him to ask for Lady Glynn."

He left her for a few moments, and Shirley made a desperate effort to regain some semblance of composure. When he returned, she had succeeded to a certain degree, and was able to look up and thank him for his kindness.

"Don't thank me," he said quickly; "your gratitude seems to hurt me. It is such a pleasure to me to do anything for my precious little wife. But come," he added quickly, regretting his words when he saw that they made her shrink from him a little—"you are able to go up now, and it is just as well not to remain in this draughty passage any longer."

Shirley rose at once, and he gave her his arm. She was still giddy enough to render its support, if not absolutely needed, very grateful to her, as she climbed up the stairs rather wearily. At the top standing on a dark but not uncomfortable-looking landing, the landlady was waiting for them, while from an open door came the cheerful ruddy blaze of a coal fire, which was burning in the sitting room into which she ushered them.

"I hope your ladyship will find everything comfortable," she said importantly. "Can I do anything more for you, sir?"

"I dare say my wife will like some tea or coffee," Sir Hugh answered in a matter-of-fact manner as if he and Shirley had been man and wife for years. "Which will you have, Shirley? Nonsense, dear—you must have something—I think some coffee will be best for you. You may say as some coffee," he added, turning to the landlady. "Let it be good, if you please."

"We can but try, sir," she said good-humouredly, as she courtesied and left the room; and Sir Hugh, after seeing that she had closed the door after her, went to the fire and looked at it, glancing furtively as he did so at the drooping slender figure resting so wearily on the horsehair-covered sofa.

"I think you will be more comfortable if you try this chair," he said cheerily, pulling up a deep old arm chair covered with faded red damask to the fire. "That looks a most uninviting couch. I have stationed Latrelle on the pavement, with injunctions to accost any one and everyone, and all answering to the description of your brother and to bring him up at once."

"Thank you," Shirley returned wearily. "You are very good."

"Then reward me for my goodness—since you persist in calling it so in spite of my entreaties—by acceding to my request and trying this arm chair. Poor child, how weary you are!" he added, as she came over to the fire and dropped into the chair.

"I am not weary at all," she answered, trying to speak indifferently.

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but failing; "but I am so anxious about Jack."

"I assure you there is no need," he said soothingly. "He has to change trains at Weldon Junction; and this is a tiresome line just about here. On the day I came from town we had to wait an hour at Weldon for a train to Dumfries."

"Do you think that is the reason of the delay?" the girl asked eagerly, catching at anything which would alleviate the agony of suspense that she was enduring.

"I have no doubt of it," he replied confidently. "Now let me take off your coat," he added, bending over her. "If you don't you will not feel the benefit of it when you go out; and you have another long cold drive before you."

"I shall not feel the cold going back if my mind is at ease about Jack," she said, submitting to his touch, as he gently and gingerly removed her wraps, partly because she was too sick at heart to oppose him, and partly because she felt grateful for the kindness and consideration he had shown her throughout the afternoon; and Sir Hugh felt his hand shake as it touched hers accidentally as he removed her sealskin coat, and his heart beat fast.

At that moment, when he was bending over her as she stood, with more tenderness on his face and in his manner than she knew, the room door opened, and Sir Hugh turned quickly with a muttered exclamation of annoyance, to see a neatly dressed maid-servant standing on the threshold.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said. "I did knock, and I thought some one told me to come in. My mistress wishes to know if you will have anything to eat with the coffee."

Sir Hugh turned to Shirley, who made a little negative gesture, and sat down in the old red chair, coloring hotly, even in her anxiety, with annoyance at the servant's entrance at such an opportune moment.

"It does not matter," Sir Hugh said, smiling at her when the maid had disappeared. "It is the most natural thing in the world for a husband to remove his wife's coat surely; and, as she is under the impression that we are man and wife, she will think no more of such a trifling occurrence. It is so new and pleasant to me," he added, "to have a lady to take care of that I am afraid of forgetting any of the little attentions which husbands generally pay their wives."

(To be Continued.)

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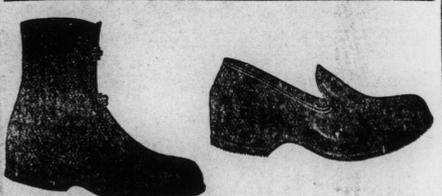
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