

"I certainly did nothing of the kind."

"Well, just set me as much as you would do."

"That will not do"—very decidedly—"I wish you to cease entirely from anything of this sort for some time, and you must take more regular exercise. You are suffering now from having remained so much in the house lately."

"I hate walking, it always makes me so tired now. The last time"—Gypsy stopped.

"Well, what the last time." Anxiously Bertrand looked at that little face, a long scrutinising look. He saw there what made him push away impatiently that heap of exercises. "I shall give you no lesson to-day, Gypsy."

Gypsy didn't speak. There was a silence for some time, then there was a little sob. Bertrand rose hurriedly and walked up and down the room. That low sob had cut his heart to the quick. At that sob all his deep love arose.

"Gypsy," he was standing near to her as he spoke, "forgive me. I did not mean to hurt you. I am a stupid old man. Forgive Uncle Bertrand, and believe that it is only a fear that you were making yourself ill which made him appear harsh in your eyes. If I give you a short lesson, will you—"

"Oh, I will do anything you wish if you will only give me a lesson."

"You say walking tires you; will you let me take you for a drive after your lesson?"

"You may do what you please with me after my lesson, if you will only give it to me."

"I am going to give it to you now, but I do wish you to understand Gypsy, that I cannot allow you to go on in this way any longer. Such continuous study without any recreation will make you quite ill. I received an invitation this morning to a ball at Mrs. Carie's. Now, it is my wish that you should go dear, to enjoy yourself. I am afraid I have kept you too much to myself; perhaps have been selfish about you, though God knows I have only wished to do right."

Gypsy looked up a little puzzled, and with not altogether a pleased look on her face; but she was silent.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

Two days after the ball, Bertrand was rather surprised at a visit from "Young Silvestre," as all his masculine friends called him. He no longer had any right to have the "young" prefixed to his name, as he was certainly far from youthful; but some fifteen years past his friends had got in the habit of calling him "Young Silvestre" in contradistinction to an "Old Silvestre"; thus the name still stuck to him. Among his own sex, young Silvestre had the name of being very dangerous to gentle hearts. Quite a woman-killer in fact. He had rather an off hand manner with women; an assuming way with him, which, with very young girls was rather *fetiching*, causing a little flutter about the region of their tender hearts, but at which older girls only smiled good naturedly, chaffing his assumption back again. Yes, young Silvestre was considered quite a lady's man, very fascinating—very irresistible.

Poor Bertrand knew all this, and had noticed with fear young Silvestre's attention to his little innocent Gypsy.

"Forgive my interrupting you, Mr. Germaine," he began in rather an ominous tone, "but I think it is but right and honorable to tell you frankly that I wish to win your niece's affections, if I have your consent."

He did not say *try* but he said *wish*, with a quiet assurance that grated on Bertrand; his heart gave one throb, and then felt like lead in his side. He wished now to God he had never let Gypsy go to that ball. Alas for the consistency of human nature! So soon had it come to him; what he had been fearing so long. So soon did some one covet his little Gypsy, the darling of his old heart; he had only loved her then to lose her. It was almost more than he could bear. He rose and walked to the window, saying, "Have you said anything about your intentions to my niece?"

"No, I thought it right to ask your permission first to be allowed to speak to her."

Oh, it was hard that he should have to give permission to some one to try to take her from him.

"You have my permission," Bertrand answered, very calmly. "I know of nothing to prevent my giving it."

"I suppose," continued young Silvestre, "Miss Melville has something of her own?"

Inwardly Bertrand winced and marvelled how such a thought could come even in connection with his Gypsy.

"Yes, in the event of her marriage she will have her own, which is no mean fortune. At my death all I have will be hers," Bertrand went on stoutly. He felt very much as if his hand was preparing his lamb for the sacrifice. I am afraid Bertrand was not of the world worldly; the world would pronounce him a sentimental old fool.

"My niece is all that I have left to me, so that I am naturally anxious about her future of course; and only anxious about her happiness."

Young Silvestre nodded a little affected nod of indifference, and rose, saying, "I think I may say, I have hardly ever cared for any woman as I do care for your niece and—well—I think she does care for me."

Bertrand was longing to see the door close on his visitor, but he maintained a perfectly polite exterior.

"I presume," went on young Silvestre, with a placid smile, exhibiting a handsome set of white teeth, "you are not aware of any rival in the field? I mean no one I shall have to fight against. No one in love with your charming niece, in fact?"

(To be Continued.)

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