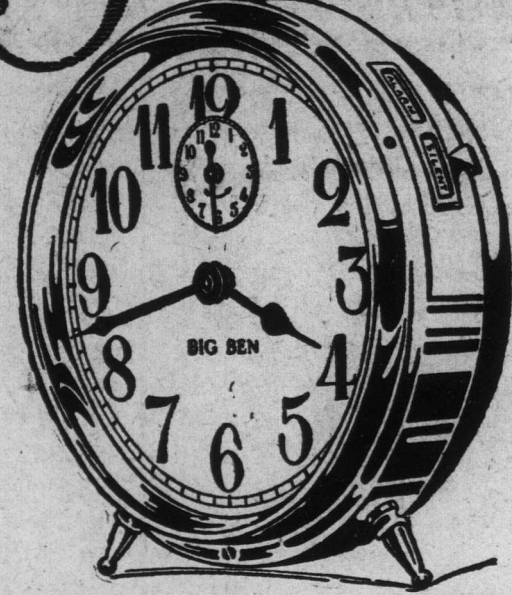


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## Love a Conqueror

—OR—  
**WEDDED AT LAST.**

### CHAPTER XXXI.

"Don't you think you had better stay and accompany Lady Glynn and Captain Layton this afternoon?" said Mrs. Beadesert gayly. "There seems to be quite a furore about these charming demesls; but I must acknowledge that I saw nothing very attractive in them."

"Perhaps not," returned Guy, smiling. "We look at things from a different point of view, Mrs. Beadesert."

"Then you will stay?"

"Thank you—no."

"Not even to call at the Vicarage?"

"Not even to call at the Vicarage," he answered, smiling. "I hope to be at Lynmouth to-night. The vicar there was my tutor for some time."

"Has he any daughters?" asked Mrs. Beadesert innocently.

"No; he is an old bachelor, like myself," said Guy, laughing.

"And a misogynist," asked the pretty widow, "like yourself?"

"Like myself, too, not a misogynist," said Major Stuart, glancing at her with a smile, "but a devoted admirer of your sex, Mrs. Beadesert. Have you made up your mind to walk a few miles over the cliff with me, Glynn?" he added, turning to the baronet.

"Yes, I think so," Sir Hugh answered, hesitating a little. "Does your way lie over the cliffs?"

"Yes, Lynmouth is about eighteen or twenty miles, I fancy."

"A long walk alone," put in Lord Rupert somewhat contemptuously.

"One cannot feel one's solitude

much in such scenery as this," said Guy.

"Don't tempt Sir Hugh into sharing your wandering existence," advised Lady Eastwell, with a glance at Sir Hugh, who smiled as his eyes rested on his wife, looking so fair and sweet in her white dress, with a soft and almost tender expression on the face which had been for so long so proud and cold.

"There is no fear of that," he answered smiling; "although I think ramble would do me good. We are a terribly lazy here. Shirley, may I look you up at the Vicarage on my return?"

"I wonder, Shirley, you are not afraid to trust him to the fascinations of these attractive demeselles," said Alice, with a little smile which had not much sweetness in it.

"I will risk that," Shirley answered gayly; and half an hour afterward she was standing with Mrs. Beadesert and Lady Eastwell on the balcony, chatting merrily as the gentlemen, who were smoking their cigars at the door below, where Major Stuart and Sir Hugh stood ready to start.

"What a curious walking stick this is of yours, Stuart!" Lord Rupert said. "Don't you find it heavy?"

"Heavy?" Guy questioned lightly. "No; it is bamboo, as you see."

"But it is leaded, is it not?" said his lordship, taking it into his hand.

"No; that top is silver," answered Major Stuart. "It was made out of a lump of silver ore which a friar brought home from South America. It was of course much larger than that, but when the lead had been removed the silver made that ball."

"It would deal a heavy blow," remarked Captain Layton, examining it.

"Yes; it would kill a man if he came sharply in contact with his temple," said Guy, laughing. "It is an old friend and companion of mine, and I rarely travel without it. I am quite ready," Sir Hugh answered, glancing up at the balcony and raising his cap, with a loving look in his blue eyes. "I will rejoin you at the Vicarage, Shirley."

"Very well." She looked down at him with a smile, then over at Guy, who smiled also as he met the lovely hazel eyes.

"Give us your flowers, Shirley!" her husband said lightly. "Let us adorn ourselves."

Shirley smiled again as she took from the lace of her morning dress two roses, one a deep damask rose the other a pure white one, and dropped them over the balcony into her husband's hands.

"Rival roses!" said Mrs. Beadesert, as she watched Sir Hugh, who, having given Guy the white rose, was

fastening the red one in the button hole of his gray tweed coat. "York and Lancaster! That is ominous, Sir Hugh."

"Why?" said Sir Hugh, laughing.

"Hath not thy rose a canker, Somerset?"

"Hath not thy rose a thorn, Plantagenet?" quoted Lady Eastwell gayly.

"Don't fall out by the way," said Mrs. Beadesert merrily. "It would be the worse for you, Sir Hugh, because, if Major Stuart has the same argument that Somerset had in his scabbard in that silver ball at the end of his stick, you will certainly have the worst of it."

"What argument was that?" Sir Hugh asked abruptly; he seemed to find Shirley's graceful figure in her white dress prettier than the little widow in her primrose satin-faced morning wrapper.

"Don't you remember?" she asked gayly. "I should have thought you read Shakespeare sometimes. Have you forgotten that charming scene in the Temple Gardens when they chose the roses? The Plantagenet asks Somerset where is his argument."

"And Somerset answers," Lady Eastwell broke in, smiling—

"Here in my scabbard, meditating that

Shall dye your white rose in a blood-red."

"Ah, but I have the red rose already!" Sir Hugh said laughingly. "So I can defy Stuart."

"Yes, possession is nine points of the law," remarked Lady Eastwell, with some meaning. "And so farewell," she added, smiling, "until I see you again."

"I hope we shall meet this autumn, Major Stuart," said Mrs. Beadesert, graciously. "I dare say we shall be visiting at the same houses."

"I may even look forward perhaps to the great pleasure of seeing you at stuartleigh," he replied, lifting his hat with the graceful courtesy which Shirley had liked so much in the old days. "Farewell, Lady Eastwell. Good-bye, Lady Glynn."

His voice changed a little when he spoke to her, changed and softened so that to Shirley's ears the simple word he had spoken carried its full meaning. He was going away; but she was leaving her a less unhappy—she could not say happier yet—and a better woman; and her lips quivered a little as he said "Good-bye," and she remembered that once in the old days they had spoken of the meaning of that word.

"Good-bye," she answered softly, thinking, as she watched the two men walk down the street side

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by side, turning at the foot of the hill to lift their hats once more with a last gesture of farewell, how soon and in what terrible circumstances she would meet Guy Stuart again.

"I am very sorry, Mrs. Gray; but I think that at least we must make up our minds to tear ourselves away."

Lady Glynn was standing by the window of the Vicarage drawing room, a pretty, shabby, homelike room with a glimpse of the sea visible from its bay-windows, and the old china bowls placed here and there with roses of every hue, which filled the room with fragrance. The piano was open, and Ada was still seated before it, turning over a pile of songs, over which Captain Layton's smooth dark head was also bent.

Lucie was standing with Shirley at the window, where they had been talking earnestly and pleasantly for half an hour and more, while Mrs. Gray had been away, occupied with a humble visitor in her husband's study. The tea-tray, with its simple white china cups and saucers, stood on a little table, and Shirley had felt amused at the eagerness with which Frederic Layton had accepted a cup of the beverage which at other times he so heartily despised, and how pleasant and natural and agreeable the usually so languid and affected young man had been under the influence of the pretty gente girls and the sweet gray-haired woman whose name, the "mother," seemed to fit her so well.

"It has been very good of you to come," Mrs. Gray said. "The girls were looking forward to your visit."

"It is very kind of you to receive us so cordially," responded Shirley, in her soft voice. "May I come again sometimes? I will try not to be troublesome, but if you knew what a pleasure your daughter's society is, Mrs. Gray."

"Whenever you come, we shall only be too glad to see you," said Mrs. Gray, with the simplicity and frankness of perfect breeding. "And you could not be troublesome, Lady Glynn."

"Thank you," Shirley answered gratefully, with a cordial pressure of her hostess's hand. "Captain Layton, I am afraid that, if we are to be received at the Vicarage again, we must take our departure now."

Captain Layton's smooth, dark head was lifted with a start.

"Already?" he said reproachfully. "Why, Lady Glynn, you were to wait here for Sir Hugh!"

"Sir Hugh has probably returned too tired to follow us," she answered smiling. "Have you any idea how long we have been here?"

"About half an hour, I should say," the young fellow answered so ruefully that Shirley laughed outright.

"Only two hours and a half!" she said merrily. "Good-bye, Lucie! I may call you so, may I not? Shall we go for a ramble to-morrow afternoon?"

(To be Continued.)

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