

Ruled Destiny!

CHAPTER XI
GLAD TIDINGS.

"Really true!" repeated Lady Betty. "Oh, I am so glad! Oh, my dear, my dear!" and she drew Floris away from him and kissed her. "I don't know what I can say, I am so pleased! Oh!" with a sudden alarm, "of course you will want to leave me now, dear!" Floris looked at her affectionately. "Why should I? Perhaps you will want to send me away, though!" Lady Betty kissed her again for an answer.

"I wish I could keep you always with me."

"Thank you, Betty. Thank you," exclaimed Lord Norman.

"Don't be foolish; I mean till you take her, sir! And"—with a sudden brightening—"why shouldn't I? Why shouldn't she stay with me? As—as my friend, I mean, dear. Of course, there must be no more of this 'companion' nonsense," and she flushed. "Fancy having the future Countess of Norman for a 'companion!'"

"If I stay—if you will let me stay," said Floris, gently, "it shall be just as I am."

"Well, well; we'll argue it out when we are alone," said Lady Betty.

"That's a tolerably broad hint for me to take my departure," said Lord Norman. "May I just have a cigarette before I go?"

"Yes," said Lady Betty, "and Floris shall tell Sir Edward when he complains of the smell which caused it. There, I am going now; good-night," and she left the two alone.

"I will not keep you to-night, my darling!" he murmured, holding her in his arms. "How happy you shall be if mortal man can make mortal woman happy! Good-night, Floris. Good-night, my future wife! Will you give me one kiss before I go?"

She hesitated for a moment. Then, for the first time in her young life, she raised her lips and laid them on a man's.

Next morning Lord Norman called his man, and with his assistance got into his morning coat and hat, and walked down to Eaton Square. It was nearly twelve o'clock, and he expected—perhaps he hoped—to be informed by the footman that Lady Blanche was not up yet.

But the man showed him into the drawing-room, and there Lord Norman waited, staring out of the window, at one moment thinking of Floris—of dear, sweet Floris!—and the next of the stately, beautiful creature to whom he was going to announce his passion for another woman.

The door opened and Lady Blanche entered.

"So early! How good of you, Bruce!" she murmured. "Have you come to breakfast? I have not had mine yet. Come with me," and she drew him gently toward her.

"No, no," he said, almost harshly in his embarrassment. "I have had my breakfast, Blanche. I am very sorry I am so early."

"It doesn't matter. You know I am

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that he had engaged a new valet.

She went to the door; the footman was standing in readiness. "Ask the gentleman to wait, please," she said.

Then she came back, and laid her hand on Lord Norman's arm.

"Now, Bruce, I am prepared!" she said, and her eyes shone and glistened up at him in a way which he remembered years afterward, and remembered all too bitterly.

CHAPTER XII.
FOR FORTUNE AND REVENGE.

"ASK the gentleman to wait!" said Lady Blanche; then she came back and stood beside Lord Norman, looking up at him with a smile in her eyes though her face was white and strained with the effort to appear calm and unmoved.

"So you are engaged to Miss Carlisle, Bruce?" she repeated.

"Yes, Blanche," he said. "You will give me your congratulations?"

"Yes, Bruce, with all my heart," she murmured. "I wish you every happiness, and her too!" and she smiled again, while her hand closed over Oscar Raymond's note tightly, fiercely.

"The marriage will take place soon, I suppose, Bruce?" she said, quite calmly, almost sweetly.

He nodded.

"As soon as possible. It is early to think of it yet. We were only engaged last night."

"Really? Why, last night, at the ball, they were saying that Miss Carlisle would be Viscountess Clifford, and all the while she had made up her mind to be Countess Norman."

His brow gathered in a frown for a moment, then he laughed.

"Oh, Bertie flirts with any one, you know, and I dare say he made all the running he could with Floris."

"Poor Bertie! Let us hope it will be no more than mere flirtation for him. Good-by, Bruce!" and she let her fingers slide coldly, icily, from his hand.

He got his hat and went downstairs, conscious of a vague feeling of surprise and confusion. At the end of the hall he saw an old gentleman, with white hair and spectacles, and wearing a cloak that gave him the look of a musician or literary man rather out at elbows, standing regarding the weather glass. The old gentleman turned, and regarded Lord Norman with a bland, amiable smile, and Bruce, touching his hat, in courteous response, passed out.

"This way," said the footman, rather curtly, and the elderly man slowly followed him up the stairs, and was admitted to the drawing-room.

Lady Blanche was standing by the window, looking down at the street, and did not turn her head until the footman had closed the door, and when she did so, she started with a gesture of astonishment.

Oscar Raymond took off his spectacles, and inclined his head, with a smile that was half amused, half sarcastic.

"I read the success of my disguise in your ladyship's face," he said, quietly.

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"Is there any need for this masquerade, sir?" she said, almost contemptuously.

"Judge for yourself," he retorted. "I have just met Lord Norman in your hall. He and I were once friends, and are now bitter foes. If he had recognized me he would have returned to warn you against me, and our plot would have been rendered abortive."

"Our plot!" she said, coldly. "I have not consented yet to join you in any plot, sir."

He raised his eyebrows, and pointed to the note, which she still held tightly in her hand.

"Then why did you answer my note, Lady Blanche?" he said, significantly.

Lady Blanche was silent for a moment, then she said in a low voice:

"Last night you said that you intended to—that you were about to separate Lord Norman and Miss Carlisle."

"I did. That is still my intention," he said.

"What is your plan?" she demanded to ask.

"At present it is not complete," he answered. "It is an unwise general who discloses an immature plan of his campaign."

"How then am I to help you?"

"In two ways; for the present you must keep me apprised of all that happens to Lord Bruce; and you must afford me the opportunity of striking the blow when the occasion offers. I shall need another accomplice, Lady Blanche."

"Another?"

"Yes," he said, coolly, "and I think I have found her. Lady Pendleton has a maid, a Frenchwoman, a dark girl with black hair—"

"Yes, I have seen her."

"Her name is Josine. She is vain, and—well, like her race generally—passionate and impulsive, and she detests Miss Carlisle. Josine, with whom I mean to be very great friends, will keep me acquainted with Miss Carlisle's movements, and will assist me to strike my blow as the hour presents itself. My plan is more than half formed already, and when it is complete, your ladyship shall hear it, and judge for yourself whether it is not sufficient for our—I beg your pardon—my purpose."

"I am compelled to trust you, Mr. Raymond," she said, in a low voice.

"You will not find your confidence abused, Lady Blanche," he said. "One thing more. Will you please regard me as Signor Paulo, your Italian master—or, stay—music would be better, and more convenient. Would it not be as well if your ladyship took your finishing lessons from an experienced master?"

As he spoke he went to the grand piano, inclined his head by way of asking permission, and seating himself, began to play.

(To be continued.)

U-Boat Strikes Mine.

ONLY TWO MEN SAVED.

London, June 17.—(Via Reuter's Ltd.)—Harrowing details of the destruction of one of the largest and recently constructed German submarines are given in a despatch from a neutral correspondent. This submarine was one of the last to leave Zeebrugge before the entrance to the harbour was blocked by British forces on April 24.

The U-boat struck a mine and out of the crew of forty only two survived on reaching the surface after a terrible struggle with death for one hour and a half, twenty fathoms below the surface. Some of the crew committed suicide, having lost all hope of leaving the boat alive.

MET TERRIBLE DEATH.

The only chance of escaping was to force open the coning tower and the forward hatches and trust to the compression of air in one part of the vessel to force each man like a torpedo to the surface. The air pressure in the submarine had become so high that the great majority of the Germans could not keep their mouths closed.

The compressed air shot them to the surface and hardly they reached the sea level when the air pressure burst their lungs and about twenty of them sank like stones. The survivors described the yell of the men, when the end came, as the most horrible noise they had ever heard.

The attention of a British trawler was attracted and it hastened to the rescue. The conduct of the survivors showed that their experiences in the submarine had been of a dreadful character.

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