



Grand Alliance;
Love That Knew No Bounds;

CHAPTER XV.
"Why you were a child. You had no part in it, Miss Sydney. And your father—he was a child too, by then! And your mother—Mrs. Alwyn—well, she had perfect legs, right to her settlements."
"Legal! Yes. But—"
Sydney dared not utter the thoughts that would surge up in her breast. Jacob could well interpret the impatient pause.

"So there was no one to do anything for them?"

"No one worth mentioning, I'm afraid. You see, I hadn't much myself."

"Jacob! I don't mean you."
"Ah, but I would if I'd been able. But, strange enough, all I'd put by for my life just before our troubles. It was your father's advice. I wanted him to take it and he refused."

"Thank Heaven!"
"Do as I tell you," he said. "Sin it, then it's safe." So I have only enough to live on, Miss Sydney, with just a little to spare. I do try to make the most of that little among the worst off of—that list. I'm afraid I haven't seen after Lewis as I ought. But it does go such a little way. And the worst of it is that I'll have to end when I end."

"Jacob!" She put her arms about this good friend's shoulders and weeping, lifted his hand to her lips. "Dear, true old Jacob, God bless you for what you have been doing! There is only myself to thank you, and can't half do it as I should. Now I know who sent my father back his violin."

"Ah, well"—she under gratitude as any girl—"that's not worth speaking of. Good as it was, I bought it for mere song, just to keep it from the dealers."

"And this, too?" touching the chain in which she sat. "And what else, Jacob?"

"Only his office book-case, Miss Sydney, and the table, and his desk. Her eyes wandered wistfully to each as he named it. "Just what I couldn't bear to see knocked about after he used them forty years. And a few trifles, such as would have gone to light the fire if I hadn't taken them. But now, my dear young lady"—she was regaining some steady firmness, sitting there with her beautiful mouth closed fast on all complaint, he thought the worst of the disclosure was well over, and he might beguile her to other subjects—"now, do let me fetch you some lunch. You should take something."

But Sydney would have nothing, nor would she let him leave her, so he listened to the slightly interwoven chances that had drawn her on to the day's discoveries, in the midst of

"Well? When Sydney and you—?"
"Have just such a stroll as this—with your good leave, Aunt Helen."
"Or without it, I suspect, then, she answered, with a satisfied laugh. "I hope we may take it for granted without going far wrong" replied Mr. Rupert, with easy assurance, "unless you mean to change sides and give my lady fair to some one else at the last moment."

"Which is very probable, is it not? You forget, my dear nephew, how your suit began."

"Indeed, I do nothing of the sort; nor that I am your debtor from that moment, and have not done with your good offices yet, Aunt Helen."

"This was nearing business, but each politely gave the other the pas on the rather delicate ground approached."

"Ah! a few hours may change your modest deference, Mr. Rupert." (No response to this. The young man

which an eight-day clock up in a corner struck three, and started her into recollection that she must be returning at once to Chaddeley.

"A quarter past—does your train go?" said Mr. Cheene, in a panic.

"Why, it's quick walking that takes you there in ten minutes. But, dear, dear, only to have had you such a little while—and to have done nothing but give you pain—and to let you go without a thought to give you comfort—"

She stopped him, fetching up in a mile that beamed like the returning sunshine through the last drops of the shower without.

"If I could have had my choice, I would not have been spared this pain," she said, and then halted half a minute. Fleeing by she seemed to see phantoms of all her late-born projects fading out, the glow her money was to cast over her future uncertain, receding, a figure hovered—Rupert Villiers. Was that to vanish too? But then uprose an hour, a promise of long ago, to ease a pain she had not understood till now—Father, never fear. I will make it all right." Cost what it might, as far as in her lay, she would keep faith with the dead. "Now everything is clear to me," she went on, steadily. I see what must be done. And you will help me to do it."

"To do what?" Mr. Cheene asked bewildered.

"To pay what has been kept back so long. We can just manage it, for it is not quite six thousand. I shall write to you from St. Clair's, Jacob, and the money shall be with you next week. Good-bye."

CHAPTER XVI.
In the warm early evening of the day following Sydney's visit to Still note-Upton, Mrs. Alwyn and her nephew strolled up and down the lawn at The Dale in conclave of a secularly private nature.

Each had a design, definite and very similar, at heart. Both were bent on having it discussed and done with before Sydney's return, which was expected in some half hour; and their conversation hovered about the important point, like bees over a blossom, undecided whereabouts to commence operations. Leonora, rather partial generally to a twilight stroll with her London cousin, kept out of the way now, obedient to a hint from her mother. But she made herself heard, if not seen. Her florid execution of "Robert, toi que j'aime," was frightening the sparrows from their nests in the ivy about the drawing-room windows, though it was quite just their proper bed-time, and he "grace pour moi, grace pour toi," pierced the still air beyond The Dale cottage tenements, evoking the doubtful compliment that "young miss yonder, she could screech, a mighty fine, an' no mistake."

"Your father admires that cavatin' so much," said Mrs. Alwyn, when the last vocal entreaty died out, exhausted, on the final D: "he remembers Trisil singing it, and thinks Leonora almost equal to her in it."

Mr. Rupert's glance followed the gyrations of a bat overhead to conceal a suspicious smile. His excellent father knew about as much of music as he himself of warfare. But on account would he gainsay the major's flattery. So he agreed, "Leonora does sing brilliantly indeed. We must get her to please the pater with that to-morrow night; when Sydney and I—"

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UNGAR'S LAUNDRY and DYE WORKS, Halifax. April 11, 13, 15

was cautious. It seemed she must go first. "But, by the way, before Sydney comes, I was wanting to say that I hope your father will not think we have asked him over for to-morrow at the last moment just for business purposes. I should be sorry for him to fancy that."

"Not the least likely, seeing he angled unblushingly for an invitation! His pretext of just running down to resign his trusteeship formally was a most transparent excuse, Aunt Helen, nor satisfying himself that all was safe and sure between Sydney and me. He is spending a great deal of order on the whole affair, I assure you."

"Which is amiable of him!" murmured Mrs. Alwyn, not giving utterance to her uppermost thought that the son had not been too lavish of the same quality throughout the "affair."

"So we must let him share our pleasure to the full, Rupert. I know Sydney will be enchanted to see him. They have a good deal in common, I think. Both impressionable, enthusiastic, eh? And—er—not very business-like; is it not so? Which brings me to what I was going to mention to you—for really we ought not to trouble your father after to-morrow with Sydney's pecuniary arrangements. I think you and I should undertake them."

"Most willingly, Aunt Helen."
"You won't consider me premature, I trust?"
"Not the least likely."
"Then I had been considering, that is possibly you will not wish for a very long engagement—"

"A month. Not a day more. A fellow feels unsettled with—with that sort of thing" (and others unnamable—unpaid bills, to wit) "hanging over him. I must make Sydney look at it in the same light, and fix the middle of July."

"Then the middle of July will be a very expensive time to me, Rupert."

Mr. Villiers barely restrained a chuckle. Of all moves on the board this was just the most advantageous for him that Mrs. Alwyn could have made. Now he thanked his stars, he had got the cue to cutting his difficulties short.

"A very expensive time!" he repeated, gravely. "Ah! I suppose so. You ladies won't be contented, I presume, unless you have the ceremony in grand style."

"Grand! Oh, dear, no! But becomingly. And you have no idea how expenses run up at such a time."

"Ah! I haven't a doubt of it, Rupert acquiesced. "I've been thinking of pretty much the same sort of thing myself. You see, when a fellow gets married he has to clear up all round, as it were, and confoundedly awkward he finds it sometimes."

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"I quite believe it."
"I'm glad you do. The pater, you see, hasn't a notion of how much is wanted for this sort of thing; though"—with a twinge of compunction—"he means to be liberal, of course. But figures run up so—"

"They do, indeed, Rupert."
"And house-furnishing makes off with ten times more than a man with my short income can get together. And—er—so—er—"

"Unquestionably, Rupert. But I am sure if this is put in the proper light to Sydney she will see that it is her duty, her delightful duty, to assist with what you name."

"Oh, you think she won't object to that?"
"Certainly not—if explained as I should take care to explain it. You would probably have to restrain her being too free-handed. But everything, with her—forgive me the expression—peculiar disposition, depends on how the matter is put before her."

"Then, my dear aunt, to be perfectly candid, will you undertake to see if she has any objection to leaving a—a thousand or so—a couple, perhaps, just loose, so as to start us off respectably, and leave us a margin for—well, things we may not have thought of, you understand? 'Tisn't wise to have to feel hampered for a five-pound note the first year one is married."

"Nor at any other time, Rupert!" A gentle reminder, this, that other interests were on the carpet besides his own. Mr. Villiers answered the helm instantly.

"Nor at any other. Dear me, no! Least of all at such a time as I hope we are coming to. I'm certain, Aunt Helen, Sydney and I would both think it unfair for you to bear the outlay that is for our glorification."

"Especially as, you see, my income is on the verge of being lessened."

"Exactly so. I should think if Sydney asked you to manipulate all her first quarter's income over the business, that wouldn't leave you much to the bad, would it?"
To be continued.

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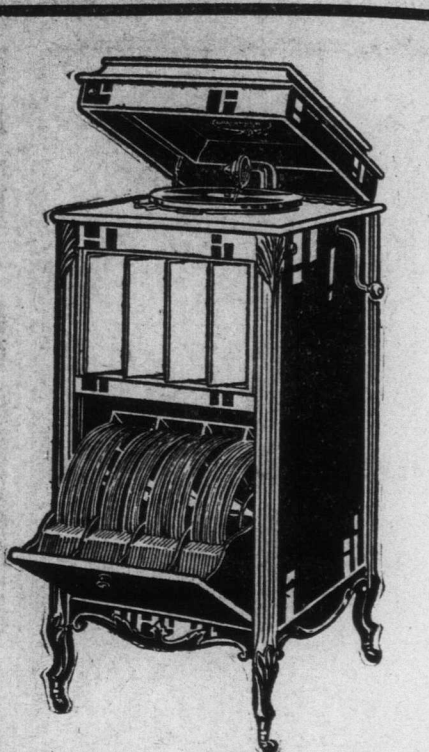
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