THE FAIR IMPOSTOR.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HIS IDOL STILL.

'NO,' she said, huskily. 'What would an honorable man do at my side? You forget! I am not Lilian Woodleigh. Why do you kneel to me, a felon flying from the just punishment of her crime.'

'Hush, hush, my darling,' he murmured, brokenly, the perspiration standing on his forehead in great drops. 'I cannot bear you thus spoken of even by yourself. Do not look so hard, so coldly on me; have some pity on me if you have none for yourself,' and he laid his hand on her arm pleadingly.

'Pity,' she echoed, mockingly. 'What pity does such an one as I deserve? Who can in justice pity an adventures who has played the felon for a prize and lost it? Why are you here?—have they come to take me?' and she raised her eyes heavily toward the cliff.

With a groan he sprang to his feet and drew her toward him.

'My darling!' he murmured, 'for Heaven's sake be silent, or you will drive me mad! You are wet through—and—and—worn out! Oh, why did you not wait until you had seen me! Why did you come here?'

She tried to escape from his grasp at first, then with a little shiver stood passive, her eyes staring beyond him.

'Why did I come here? Why not here as elsewhere? Where should I go? Why do you not leave me?——your presence fills me with shame——shame!' and for the first time a flush of shame crept over her pale face, and her eyes drooped.

His heart beat with sudden delight.

'Shall I tell you why I am here?' he whispered, pressing her closer to him, and shuddering with infinite pity as he felt how wet and cold she was. 'I have come to lay my life at your feet, my darling, my queen; to offer you once again the love, which all unworthy as it is, fills all my being.'

'Love! You still love me,' she breathed, with self-scorn.

'I still love you with a greater, deeper love, if that were possible, than I have ever loved you. Hilda, look at me! You do not doubt me! Do not think that such love as mine would be killed in an hour? Nothing can kill it!'

'Shame,' she mumured.

'No shame, no sorrow, no scorn!' he answered, fiercely. 'I am not as other men, Hilda. I am no saint, spotless and without flaw. I am stained and scarred with the dust of life's battle. But for you I would have gone the steep path to ruin. unloving, unloved, with the taste of the dead sea fruit of the world clinging to my lips. You have saved me from a worthless, purposeless existence. What is the past to me—your past or mine? It is the present, the future I claim from you, and my love which has groved itself, demands its reward. Hilda, I am at your feet, at the feet of the only woman I have ever loved, ah! worshiped! Will you send me away?'

Trembling, panting, her hands pressed to her bosom, she looked dawn at him. What should she say? 'Send him from you—you felon and outcast!' whispered unselfish love; but her tortured heart pleaded for them both.

With a sob, she stretched out her hands slowly, and, with a cry of almost fierce delight, he caught her to him. Not white and cold now, but flushed and burning, she hid her face upon his shoulder.

'At last—at last!' he breathed, kissing her passionately. 'Oh, my darling! are you really mine at last? Can I believe that it is true—that it is no dream—that you are here in my arms—that I can kiss you like this, and this—and that you love me?'

Slowly, almost painfully, she turned her face up to him, and looked up into his passionate eyes.

'I love you?' she echoed, with a sad smile. 'I have loved you since that night—long, long ago—ever since that night! But—but I waited?'—her eyes filled with tears—'I waited until I was not fit for you to look at or to touch.'

'Hush! hush!' he murmured, hoarsely. 'Let the past bury its dead. To me you have been, and always will be while life is left, my darling and my queen. Hush! not a tear must spoil my perfect happiness. How wet you are, my darling!'

'Wet—I?' she murmured, looking down. 'Yes, I had forgotten it; ah! I had forgotten everything.'

And she shuddered.

'And I, too,' he said, with his short laugh. 'Come, you are not afraid—you have no doubts now, not while I am here? Come, lean upon me quite, quite close. Stay!'

And, taking off his coat, he wrapped it round her against all her entreaties and faint struggles.

'I shall not hurt,' she murmured. 'It is you who should take care—you who have been so ill, so ill! and are still weak.'

'I weak!' he laughed, with a glad light in his eyes; 'I am as strong as a giant to night. See now! one word more, and I will take you up and carry you to that hut to which we are now going.'

She shrank back.

'No, I will come. Oh, my love! my love!'

With his heart beating against hers, he led her to the hut. The fisher-wife stared at them with frank wonder, and pointed to the beach, where her husband and son were standing by their boat.

'Go in and sit for a moment, darling,' whispered Dawson Slade.

Then he hurried down to the man; gold gleamed in the moonlight; the boat was running into the waves, and in a quarter of an hour was sailing toward the coast of France.

Wrapped in the fisher wife's homespun shawl, Hilda lay in the stern, her head resting against the bosom of the man whose love had lived through good and ill repute, and passed an ordeal throught which man's love but seldom comes unscathed and whole; her face turned to the pale moon that seemed to look down with calm, pitying majetty, her heart throbbing with that pain which is but the precursor of peace, the pain and anguish of a penitence which, unlike remose, springs from love and not from fear. Silent and rapt he watched her. Once and again he bent his handsome head and pressed a kiss with reverential worship upon her forehead and her lips, and in silence still they floated out from the past into the future.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHILE LOVE LASTS.

THE springtime is passing again, all round the Woodleigh woods the birds made the trees musical with their songs of welcome to the coming summer.

Silent and voiceless the old Hall stands, in the midst of its hoary elms and gnarled oaks, for since the mortal remains of "Wild Woodleigh" were carried from it to the tomb, no human creature save the steward has passed its threshold. Its owner, Sir Harold Woodleigh, is far away in foreign lands, whence no sign or message ever comes from him. Dust lines thick on the costly furniture which Sir Talbot had caused to be made for the girl whom he loved as a daughter; spiders have spun cobwebs across the pictures in the gallery, and drawn filmy veils over the windows through which she who was known as Lilian Woodleigh used to look.

And while the owner of the Hall and its acres thus leaves it to neglect and the ruin of disuse, the real Lilian Woodleigh, the gentle-hearted girl whom we knew as Ethel North, now the possessor of all Sir Talbot's wealth likewise turns her back upon all that wealth could yield her, and sits pale and dreamy eyed in the little parlor of Dame Hester's cottage. She is dressed in black as of old, wears no ornament as of old, and save that she bears the time-honored name which had so long been withheld from her, might still to all appearance be the penniless, little organist.

On the day of Sir Talbot's funeral, all most within an hour of the reading of the will, Harold had taken his departure for the Continent. He had scarcely seen, had not exchanged half a dozen words with his cousin, Sir Talbot's heiress, the Ethel North he loved. Even when he held her hand and said the few words of farewell, his eyes were fixed on the ground, his voice was cold. No one more unlike the open-hearted Harold of old could be imagined. And she was as cold.

'Good by,' he said, hat in hand. 'Everything had been arranged, excepting what is to be done with the Hall—if——' and he had paused. 'If I thought that you would accede to it, I would give expression to my dearest desire that you would make this your home——'

To be continued.

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Anderson, Miss M. E., card, Temperance House
Aspell, John, late Bonavista Railway
Alsop, Mrs., card
Armstrong, Miss, Gower St.
B
Batson, Miss, care Mr. Barnes, Power Street
Blandford, Mrs. S., Cook Street
Batten Isaac
Bart, Louis
Banks, Miss Bertha, George's Street
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Barbor, or Barter, Mrs. Jos., Barter's Hill
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Benson, Miss, 16 —— Street
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Buffett, H., care E. House
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Butler, Miss care Jas. Fletcher
Butt, Elizabeth
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Butler, Mrs. A., Lion's Square
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Clark, Miss Mary, care G. P. O.
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Clear, John, late Bonavista Branch
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Crane, Joseph
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G. P. O., September 23rd, 1910.

H. J. B. WOODS, P.M.G.

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