

Grand Alliance; Love That Knew No Bounds.

CHAPTER XVIII. "Disgrace!" the old clerk began— but the brain was gliding on. He could only, hat in hand, bid her good-bye...

Then, with the end of wandering in view, came the fear of excessive weariness, the fall of spirits too long forced. As she made the last mile foot...

Sydney had speculated at different points of her journey on what the "us" of Miss Hurst's communication signified.

Now whether to be glad or sorry, in the surprise of this recognition, she hardly knew. The feeling uppermost was hope.

"I have seen your brother before, Miss Hurst, so we are not quite strangers."

"As I should have known the instant I heard you speak," said Mr. Hurst, turning toward her voice with some eagerness...

"Well, really," cried Miss Hurst, "this is extraordinary! for both to have met, both spoken to you! And then for you to have found a reason for taking the situation I was talking to you about without the slightest notion of your ever wanting it! That was a most remarkable morning! I hope its events may work for the benefit of us all, Miss Grey."

Remarkable truly! Sydney, yet bewildered over its curious climax, had forgotten her new personality and was thinking instead of responding.

"Oh, no! Why should we? I'm quelling a faltering of nerve—I never mean to." And reassured by this, her hostess, employer, whatever she was to be, shook hands once more to make up, perhaps, for her brother's not having done so at all, and led the

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New-comer upstairs, just uttering the audible warning. "Gilbert, stand still till I come down. You are not used to this room. You may knock the chairs over if you move."

"It's a fearful trial to him, Miss Grey," she pursued, ushering Sydney to her room, "and in a less degree to me. I'm sure he's never off my mind a moment. And the better he bears it the more I've felt it my duty to keep with him, and make him cheerful. which is not easy. That reacts upon myself, and is the real cause of my feeling we must have a third party. You understand, I couldn't enter on his writing. It would have looked awkward to say, 'I want you expressing to help in taking charge of a blind man,' would it not? And I thought, if you'll excuse my saying so, that as you frankly said you were leaving some from circumstances you would rather not mention, why, I might be allowed a little reservation, too. You see?"

"Quite," said Sydney, smoothing her dark hair back with tired hands. "Since from reproach, leave to earn bread, was all she felt to wait while. "This makes no difference to me, Miss Hurst; only show me how to be useful; I will do my best."

"And I will show you that fast enough," said Miss Hurst, cheerfully, "but we need not begin to-night. Supper will be ready in a few minutes, if you can find your way down. There's not much space to go astray in. Your room and mine look out at the back—a lovely view by daylight. Through the swing-door, the staircase, and my brother's room. His is shut in by poplars, but that doesn't matter. As I thought when your letter reached me—"

"Yes?" said Sydney, Miss Hurst having come rather inconsequently to a standstill. "You thought?"

"Oh, hesitating, "nothing particular, Miss Grey; I shall run on till I tire you. But," turning back with a droll bird-like air of caution, "excuse my naming it; I hadn't mentioned anything about you to my brother. Odd, but I hadn't—"

Very odd, as Sydney could realize later, for her new friend had not the faculty of keeping much to herself.

"So he knows nothing about you; age or anything personal. And it's as well, perhaps, he should not. You will feel more comfortable if he imagines you, like me, about seven-and-thirty. It will put us on a pleasant footing, won't it?"

Sydney scarcely saw the force of the argument, but agreement being expected, gave it without qualification.

"From seventeen to seventy," she said, smiling, "I don't mind the least; I won't announce that I am just twenty-one!" and Miss Hurst, descended, well pleased. "A nice capable Person, I think, this Miss Grey will turn out," she informed her brother, who stood resignedly as she had left him—"intelligent unless I'm much mistaken. So, Gilbert, I hope I've hit on the means of giving you pleasure and myself rest. No"—stopping at a disturbed gesture of her brother—"I didn't mean that of course. I'm always ready to wait on you, Gilbert, my dear and attend to you. I consider my time freely yours. Still, I mean, you'll naturally like a change of voice about you, and I can get out now and then, which is what I've never liked to do, for fear you should have an accident before I got back. Now this—person" (an appellation so charmingly vague, Miss Hurst kept it sacred to Sydney for many months) "will be in charge of you, as it were, and I shall be easy. And I can manage the extra expense. I do want you to be comfortable. You are sure of that, Gilbert?"

Eye she could trace this fancy, or half take in the fair scene of rising tree-clad hills, basking in pure morning light, undulating just enough to give a glimpse of blue Welsh mountain-tops, miles away, Miss Hurst was heard below summoning her brother to breakfast, her voice keeping up a disjointed monologue about as appropriate as her speeches of the night previous.

"Come along, Gilbert, I want you in. It's nice, isn't it," going to meet him. "If you are settled in your place before a stranger comes down? Let me open the gate. She'll soon be used to you, and will not notice anything much. I think you wonderfully handsly—considering! Mind this corner. Jones put some pansies here and charged me a shilling. You wouldn't like to walk on them, so I warn you. My poor geranium, that you tumbled off the window-ledge, ad not yet recovered. But you could set help it, so we'll forget about it, won't we?" She had got him by the shoulder now, and was trotting awkwardly beside him. "Don't you think Gilbert, you might take your other worn coat into wear for mornings? This is fraying at the cuff, and I put a odd button on. By ourselves it didn't signify. But really it's only a one to give Jones. I'll find the money for a new suit soon. You must be properly dressed before a third party. Perhaps you'd better change now. Oh, it's too late. Here she comes!—Good-morning, Miss Grey. My brother intends to honor you with a better coat. But I tell him it's no onsequence till to-morrow. I trust you went to sleep soon. This brother I mine had a bad habit of sitting up after every one else" ("lamp out, of course!" in overdistant aside), "and heard him stumble on the stairs. Was afraid he might disturb you."

"But he had not the least," Sydney hastened to assure them. "She had left quite enough, and—putting off embarrassing topics—"what a prospect there was from the window! The roads and the river made a perfect picture.

But at this innocent remark Miss Hurst, with nods and signs that infinitely perplexed Sydney, made answer. Oh! the place was pretty enough. Few-comers thought much of it. Those who were used to it scarcely gave it a thought, though. She did not! And now, would Miss Grey get a good breakfast, then she would like to unpack, and then—more significant gestures—"they would have a alk upstairs."

(To be continued.)

He was pacing to and fro on the asphalted path bounding the garden, which sloped from house to river, his well-knit frame more upright than he might be, seemingly free from the burden of the cumbrous are of his sister. To the gate of an orchard one way, to a Hawthorn edge the other, he passed and rested, turning with a certainty that old the way familiar. The sunshine, glinting through lilacs and acacias, fell on a face so full of resolute endurance that Sydney took shame to herself for having for a moment shrunk at the idea of serving him by any effort she could command. No she thought, with a generous commiseration, if it came within her scope to often the angles of his sister's "excellencies," to ward off some of the slings by which affection buffeted him, why, hers be the task right willingly. Smoothing his obvious troubles might deaden her hidden ones. "Ah!" Her thoughts were traveling upward when she dispelled them with the frightened exclamation, Mr. Hurst had gone through the orchard reversed the sloping meadows beyond, and now stood on the very brink of the hurrying river, that gleamed sparkling and shimmering over pools and shallows, between this over and the western bank. Surely he must be in danger. Sydney flung up her window hastily, but might have spared herself alarm. Gilbert Hurst knew every inch of Wynstone, and, before her rising cry took note, had turned from the seeming peril and thrown himself on a rough bench among the tall grass, in an attitude that he must have assumed in her dreams, so certain she felt of having seen him thus before.

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