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Love a Conqueror

WEDDED AT LAST!

CHAPTER XVIII.

Suddenly the loud triumphant notes of Oswald's music ceased, and his fingers wandered into a soft quaint melody, and, after a minute's prelude, his rich tenor voice rose softly and clearly, singing these words—

"Linger, O gentle time! Linger, O radiant grace of bright to-day!

Let not the hour's chime Call thee away. But linger near me still with fond delay.

"Linger—for thou art mine. What dearer treasures can the Future hold?

What sweeter flowers than thine Can she unfold— What secrets tell my heart thou hast not told?

"Linger: I ask no more; Thou art enough forever—thou alone What future can restore. When thou art flown, All that I hold from thee and call my own?"

"That is a dreary little song," Guy said softly. "The future will not take away our joys, my darling, and it may hold 'dearer treasures' for us."

"It would be difficult for it to do that dear," Shirley softly returned. "Oh, Guy, I can imagine no happiness greater than ours now!"

"I can," said Major Stuart. "I can imagine you and I alone together, sweet; and that seems a much pleasanter state of things to me even than the present. Do you think you will regret your liberty, Shirley?"

"I do not think that I have had much liberty to boast of since I came to Scotland," she answered, smiling; "and before that why— Oh, Guy," she added, breaking off suddenly, "it makes me happier now to think that my dear mother saw you, and that almost her last words to me were a message of

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thanks to you for your kindness to her!"

"I am glad of that," he said gently. "I think if she knows how deeply I love you, my dearest, she will be glad that you are to be mine. What is it bedtime already?"

"It is getting late," answered Lady Fairholme, smiling, "and I can't have pale cheeks to-morrow; so, as we have no rouge in the house, I am going to send all these young people to bed."

"Good-night, my own, until to-morrow," Guy said, with a long close pressure of the little hand and a long last look at the lovely face—a last look indeed, for he never saw it again as it was then. And Shirley said nothing, but only lifted her eyes to his, and then turned away.

As she said good-night, to her uncle, he gave her the letter which he took from his pocket.

"I am obeying your mother's wish in giving you this, Shirley," he said gently. "I should have kept its contents a secret from you still, but she wished it."

"Thank you, Uncle Gilbert," the girl answered, a little surprised; "and thank you with all my heart for all your goodness to me," she added, so earnestly that the tears rose in the beautiful eyes; and Sir Gilbert kissed her kindly on the forehead, and bade Heaven bless her in a tone of gentleness very unusual to him.

"Now, girls, don't get chatting and sitting up late," Lady Fairholme said smiling as she took her bedroom candlestick and went her way; and the girls laughed and promised, but went nevertheless into Shirley's room to see the wedding dress, which had been unpacked, and which lay in all its bridal finery upon the couch in her room.

When they had admired it to their hearts' content, and stroked with gentle white fingers the glossy satin and filmy lace, Alice and Ruby went away, leaving Shirley in solitude at last.

There was a bright fire burning in the grate, and Shirley stood looking at it with dreamy thoughtful eyes for a moment; then she turned away and began hastily to undress. As she removed the pretty blue dress, the letter fell from its folds, and she stooped quickly and lifted it, feeling guilty and remorseful because of the little thought she had given her mother's communication—her dead mother!

She threw the blue dress carelessly aside and hastily slipped on a dressing-gown; then seating herself before the fire, she took out the letter for a few minutes she examined it gently, touching it with tender reverent fingers and looking at it with eyes into which great tears rose as she gazed. She knew the handwriting well—the pretty graceful handwriting which had had been so familiar to her. How clearly it brought her mother back to her now—the dear gentle mother who had never given her a cross word, who had always sympathized so perfectly with

her joy and with her girlish sorrows! Ah! how joyful she was to-night to think that her little daughter was so happy! How proud and fond of

Guy she would have been, and what a devoted son he would have been to her! Ah! darling mother!

Looking at the letter, with its tender superscription, "To my dear little Daughter," brought back clearly that last sad journey and the anxiety she had shown to tell Shirley something. What was it? Ah, she would know now! Those broken piteous sentences would soon be explained. Tenderly, with fingers which were a little unsteady in their eagerness, Shirley broke the seal of the letter, and drawing the lamp nearer to her, spread out the closely written sheets.

CHAPTER XIX.

"When this letter is given to you, my child, you will be about to enter upon a new, untried life; and that you may not forget your mother then I have written these lines—written them with such loving thought of you, my daughter, and with such earnest prayer for your happiness and welfare, that, even if they sadden you a little, you must not mind now."

"What I am going to write here for your perusal is the story of my life—a story which more than once lately, dear, as I feel my health failing, I have been tempted to tell you. Not that I want to sadden you by telling you that my life is drawing to a close—my poor children, if I could save you that pain, I would gladly live, even though, life is such a dreary thing now—but I think you ought to know my story, Shirley.

When I am gone to meet your father once more—Heaven is so merciful that I dare look forward to that—you will live in Scotland, the country I once loved so dearly, but which I shall never see again, for it has been very cruel to me, my child. Perhaps, after all, it will be well that you should not know this story of mine until you are on the eve of marriage. I think, Shirley, and I hope with all sincerity and fervor, that you will never marry a man you do not love. Surely I have given you such notions of truth and honor as will preserve you from the sin and the shame of a loveless marriage! If you do not love the man you are going to marry, my daughter, it will not be too late to retract even at the last moment; it will be better to suffer any blame than to go a step further on a road which must inevitably lead to sorrow and misery, and perhaps to sin and dishonor.

"But, if, as I hope, my child, you love the man to whom you are betrothed it will help you to be gentle and lenient and merciful to the poor erring mother who has loved you with a love which ought, with all her faults, to induce you to think of her kindly. I should have liked to tell you the story, to have seen the pity-

ing love on your face; but, if that pity and that love did not show themselves there, how could I have borne it? So perhaps it is better as it is.

"You know the earlier part of my history, Shirley; you know that I was an only and petted daughter and a spoilt and indulged sister. I lost my father and mother while I was still a child, but your uncle, who was some years my senior, filled the place of those dear parents with such a tenderness that I missed them but little. He indulged me in every whim, he gave me my own way in everything; and I grew up proud, willful, and heedless of everything but my own pleasure.

"I was beautiful—you, too, my child, possess that fatal dowry of beauty; but I trust it will bring you only happiness. It is a great and precious gift if used aright, and gives the possessor a great power and influence for good or evil. I used my power for evil, Shirley; I employed my beauty as a snare to win hearts and toy with them as long as it pleased my fancy; then I cast them aside, careless whether the wounds I inflicted were serious or not. Flirtation is not looked upon as a sin in the time in which we live, Shirley; but I pray Heaven, my child, that you will be kept from such unwomanly shame.

"Among my admirers was a gentleman some ten or fifteen years my senior, whose suit my brother favored strongly. Sir Henry Proctor was a man of large property and distinguished family; he was, moreover, very handsome and agreeable; and he loved me—yes, he loved me. But there are so many different kinds of love, my darling, that it is difficult to know which is the true kind. This was true, so far as it went; but he referred his happiness to mine, and true love does not do that.

(To be Continued.)

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0798.—A NEAT AND ATTRACTIVE DESIGN.



Ladies' House or Home Dress (in Raised or Normal Waistline, and with Long or Shorter Sleeve). Gray and white checked gingham was used for this model, with facings of gray on cuffs and collar. The dress is equally appropriate for chamber, percale, challis, flannel, etc. and serge. It has a waist cut in surplus style, finished with deep tucks over the front, and a neat low collar. The skirt has deep hem tucks and may be finished in raised or normal waistline. The Pattern is cut in 6 sizes: 32, 34, 36, 38, 40 and 42 inches bust measure. It requires 7 yards of 36 inch material for a 38 inch size.

0523.—A PLEASING HOUSE OR CALLING GOWN.



Ladies' Dress with or without Chemisette and with Long or Shorter Sleeve.

Brown checked gingham with trimming of tan chambray is here shown. The design is appropriate for all wash materials, and will develop equally well in silk or cloth. Green linen, with white embroidery for trimming would make a cool dainty frock. Blue and white wash silk finished simply with stitching, and worn with a chemisette of fine lawn would also be pleasing. The fronts of the waist are cut low and finished on one side with a smart revers. The neck opening reveals the chemisette, which may be omitted. The skirt shows a new back, with dart tucks, the fullness of these tucks may be arranged in gathers. The pattern is cut in 6 sizes: 32, 34, 36, 38, 40 and 42 inches bust measure. It requires 6 yards of 36 inch material for a 36 inch size.

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