

HEART TO HEART;

OR, LOVE'S UNERRING CHOICE.

CHAPTER V.—(CONTINUED.)

The dread day of the funeral dawned clear and cold; and, leaning upon her lover's arm, in anguish far too deep for tears, Hilda followed the coffin, which, covered with a silver-fringed velvet pall, was borne upon the shoulders of his men to the beautiful old church, where all that was mortal of Mark Deloraine was deposited in the vault beneath where so many of his ancestors slept their last long sleep. When Hilda re-entered her desolate home, Nigel Wentworth stepped forward and requested her presence in the library, and, accompanied by Montacute and Mrs. Palmer, who, with the Vicar, Maria and several of the dead Squire's most intimate friends, had returned with her to the Abbey, she proceeded to the library. A middle-aged man of grave aspect stood on the rug in front of the huge fire; he bowed formally to Hilda as she entered, and Mr. Wentworth said:

"This gentleman is Mr. Wilmot, the confidential adviser of your uncle, Colonel Reginald Deloraine."

Hilda held out her hand to the strange lawyer, and asked timidly:

"Is my uncle here, Mr. Wilmot?"

"No, madam," he replied. "Colonel Deloraine's health is delicate, and his medical men forbade him taking a journey in such inclement weather. I am here to attend to his interests."

"I am not aware that that is necessary," said Roger hotly, stung by a certain something in the lawyer's manner, for which he was quite unable to account. "Miss Deloraine is her father's only child and acknowledged heiress, and I believe Mr. Wentworth here can assure you that it was his client's intention that his daughter should inherit everything."

"Possibly," said Mr. Wilmot, calmly; "and perhaps Mr. Wentworth, being, as you say, in the late Mr. Deloraine's confidence, can also inform me whether the squire left any will."

"I should say certainly not," said Roger. "I never heard him hint at such a thing; everyone knew that his daughter was sole heiress."

Again the same unpleasant smile curved Mr. Wilmot's lips as, taking no notice of the impetuous young man, he turned to Nigel, and said:

"I asked you, sir, whether the late Mr. Deloraine left a will or not?"

Nigel turned as pale as death, and paused a moment ere he replied. Surely his good and evil angels strove for mastery in that brief pause. Alas! unavailingly, for he answered in a firm, steady voice:

"Not that I am aware of. He would hardly have employed any one else to execute his wishes. There was no necessity for any will, and his death was so sudden."

"Just so," replied Colonel Deloraine's lawyer. "Then I have to inform you that I claim all the estate, the house, lands, funded property, plate and jewels, on behalf of my client, Colonel Reginald Deloraine, who is the sole surviving relative of the late Mark Deloraine."

"You must be mad," exclaimed Roger, starting forward and laying a heavy hand on Mr. Wilmot's shoulder, "that you make such unseemly jests at such a time as this. How can any one be more nearly related to Mr. Deloraine than his own child, Hilda Deloraine?"

"His own child, possibly," replied Wilmot, "but not Hilda Deloraine. Hilda O'Connor is the squire's illegitimate child, and as such cannot inherit one penny of his fortune."

"Oh, my God!" broke from the white lips of the unhappy girl, and Roger rushing up to Wilmot, would have felled him to the ground had not Wentworth placed himself before him.

"For Heaven's sake, commit no violence Mr. Montacute," he exclaimed; "you will do Miss Deloraine no good, and yourself a great deal of harm."

"Let him retract that lie, or I will force his words down his throat," said the young man, struggling to free himself from Wentworth's grasp.

"It is no lie," rejoined Wilmot calmly, "do you think, sir, that I should be such a fool as to assert a thing I could not prove. Either produce the register of Miss Deloraine's marriage with Catharine O'Connor, or the squire's will; if you can do neither, this young lady must be prepared to vacate the Abbey as soon as possible."

It is impossible to describe the effect which Mr. Wilmot's speech produced upon the assembled company. Poor Hilda tried to speak, but in vain, and with a low sob of unutterable anguish she sank upon the ground in a state of insensibility.

"Aunt," said Roger reproachfully to his relative, who had sat in stony silence during the whole scene, as he raised Hilda in his arms, "come and help to restore my poor darling."

"Better ring for her maid, Roger," said the lady sternly; but Roger, looking defiantly at his aunt, lifted Hilda from the floor, and bore her in his strong arms from the room.

Mr. Wilmot turned to Nigel and said gravely:

"It is a sad blow for the poor girl, Mr. Wentworth, but you may depend upon it that I have only asserted the truth. I am surprised that Mr. Deloraine did not make a will."

"I did not say that he did not, only that I was not instructed by him on the subject," interrupted Nigel.

"Well, then," said Mr. Wilmot, "it is our duty to make a search at once. Of course, my client only wishes to obtain what is justly his right, and should not be found, I am instructed to offer Miss O'Connor the sum of 100 pounds a year for her support, and of course all her own personal property is at her own disposal."

Roger returning at this moment, the three gentlemen proceeded to search in every place, likely or unlikely, where the

will might have been deposited, but all to no avail. They continued their quest while the short Winter day deepened into dusk, and resumed it again the next morning until every deed box, and chest, table drawers and desks had been thoroughly turned out, and still there was no sign of either will or marriage certificate. Among other papers of the squire's they found a diary bearing the date of the years in which Katie O'Connor had left his home. Among the entries were the following brief lines:

"August 16.—No clue to the whereabouts of poor Katie and her child, though I called twice at Scotland Yard to inquire."

"September 6th.—Found a brief note in one of Katie's drawers evidently addressed to myself, containing more jealous tirades against Lady Grace, whom she insists upon imagining I am about to marry; poor, foolish girl!"

These and other entries of the same kind plainly proved that Mark Deloraine had never married Kate O'Connor, and Roger's heart sank like lead in his breast as he perused them.

When every receptacle in the Abbey where a will could possibly have been placed had been thoroughly examined, Roger was obliged to own himself beaten and to admit that his beloved Hilda was now indeed nameless, homeless, and save for himself, utterly friendless.

"I shall remain here, Mr. Montacute," Wilmot had said, "and it is, I think, advisable that Miss O'Connor should leave as soon as she can make convenient, in a week or two at any rate, as Colonel Deloraine wishes to visit the Abbey and will not do so while she remains. Mr. Wentworth has promised to inform her of what my client proposes to do for her."

And Roger had no resource but to promise to see Hilda and tell her of the fate in store for Mark Deloraine's idolized daughter.

CHAPTER VI.

"A CHILD OF MISFORTUNE."

Roger found Hilda seated in the dressing-room bending over a writing table sorting papers and burning letters. She raised her head with a sad smile as her lover entered the room.

"You bring me no good news, Roger, I can see by your face," she said, rising and going to meet him, pale indeed, but perfectly resolute and composed.

"No, my poor darling girl," exclaimed the young man; "we can find no trace of any will, and indeed, I hardly expected we should do so, as Mr. Wentworth seemed so positive that the squire had never made one. Well, we must bear it, darling, drawing her to his bosom and kissing her pale lips with fond passion. "There will be no disrespect to the dear squire's memory in my giving his child a home at once. We will be quietly married next week, dear, and go away for a short time, till this nine days' wonder is forgotten."

"And do you think, my dear, generous Roger, that I will do you so great a wrong as to become your wife now— penniless, and with this cruel stain upon my name? No, love, I will not be so selfish. I can never become your wife," a bitter sob choking her voice as she spoke, while she gently disengaged herself from his circling arms.

"What utter nonsense you are talking, Hilda," exclaimed Roger, impetuously. "Why, do you think I will ever give you back your promise? Never! Of that I can assure you. What does it matter to me whether your name is Deloraine or O'Connor? You are my Hilda all the same, and my name, darling, shall be yours as soon as you will take it."

"You forget your aunt, Roger," murmured Hilda, suffering him, however, to draw her close to his faithful breast. "What will Mrs. Palmer say?"

"Oh, never mind my aunt," rejoined her lover. "She always does everything I wish. Besides she always loved you, Hilda."

But, in spite of his bold words, he felt an uneasy quiver as he remembered his aunt's look and tone when she spoke of Hilda, whose sweetness and beauty in Mrs. Palmer's opinion could not atone for her loss of fortune and the bar sinister on her escutcheon.

What need to repeat all the lover's fond, foolish words, as he urged a speedy marriage upon Hilda? Enough to say that, despite her better judgment, she yielded to his impassioned pleading, and promised him that when she left the house of which she had always been considered the heiress it should be for a husband's roof and a husband's protection. And they sat together on the sofa while the short Winter day deepened into dusk, Hilda with her golden head pillowed upon Roger's breast, heedless of the heavy storm clouds so soon to break upon their heads. The servants had turned the house of mourning into a house of feasting, and were entertaining some dropsters from the village with strong tea and unlimited gossip, and it was 6 o'clock before Hilda's maid brought in her mistress's tea, with a murmured apology for the lateness of the hour. Like all the rest of the household, the lady's maid knew that Hilda had fallen from her high estate, and was not slow to take advantage of the change in her situation. When Perkins had drawn the heavy velvet curtains over the two large windows and stirred the fire into a cheerful blaze, lighting the clusters of wax lights upon mantelpiece and writing table, Roger rose up, and, taking Hilda's hands in his, bade her an affectionate farewell, and promising to ride over and see her on the morrow, followed Perkins from the apartment. As Hilda sank down in her luxurious chair by the fire and sipped her tea out of the exquisite Sevres cup, how little did she dream of the change in her destiny that the next twenty-four hours would bring forth. Her heart was very heavy as she sat there in loneliness and sorrow, and her bright eyes were dim with tears as she thought of the tender father whose sudden death had left her so desolate.

"Oh, my darling," she sighed, lifting anguishful eyes to the likeness of Mark Deloraine, which smiled at her from the

velvet-covered mantelpiece, "could you be happy if you knew how terribly your child is suffering, how lonely she is now without your fond love, your tender companionship?"

As she thus apostrophized her beloved dead she perceived a note which Perkins had deposited upon the writing table by her side—a delicately perfumed note, in a square, pale-gray envelope, its elaborate monogram in violet and silver, bearing the letters "E. P."

Taking it up and glancing listlessly at the direction, a wave of color flooded her pale cheek on seeing that it was addressed to "Miss O'Connor," and was in the well-known handwriting of Mrs. Palmer. A frown contracted her brow as she tore open the note and read as follows:

"The Temple, Thursday.

"Dear Miss O'Connor—" ("she might have spared me that blow" she murmured, "especially as she has always called me Hilda," and she resumed the perusal of Mrs. Palmer's curt epistle.) "I am anxious to see you at once upon business that admits of no delay, and will call at the Abbey to-morrow morning, between 10 and 11 o'clock, and trust to find you alone and disengaged. Believe me, truly yours, E. PALMER."

The note dropped from Hilda's hand and the tears she had hitherto repressed streamed from her eyes.

"How cruel!" she exclaimed between her sobs, "how insulting! And only a week ago she called herself my warmest, truest friend. Oh, papa! papa!" said the unhappy girl, flinging herself upon her knees by the sofa and hiding her face in the brocade cushions, "take your poor Hilda away from all this cruelty! How can I live, despised and alone!"

The next morning, punctually at the hour she had named, the door of Hilda's boudoir was opened by Perkins, who announced Mrs. Palmer. Hilda rose from her seat and advanced to greet the old lady, whom she had not seen since the sad day of Mark Deloraine's funeral.

"You wished to see me, Mrs. Palmer?" she faltered, as she wheeled an easy chair close to the blazing fire for her visitor.

"Yes, Hilda," replied Mrs. Palmer, "I am very anxious, as an old friend of the poor Squire's, to know whether I can aid you in your plans for the future, and it is time you made some arrangements, as Mr. Wilmot informs me that Colonel Deloraine wishes to come to the Abbey the week after next, and of course you cannot remain here much longer."

Poor Hilda felt her heart sink like lead in her breast at this unfeeling speech, and it was with the utmost difficulty that she could command her voice sufficiently to reply:

"I have made no plans, Mrs. Palmer, Roger was here yesterday, and he wished me to—"

At the mention of Roger's name, Mrs. Palmer at once abandoned the smooth "society" tone in which she had hitherto spoken, and exclaimed:

"It is better to speak plainly to you, Hilda, and to assure you that I cannot under the circumstances, countenance any engagement whatever between yourself and my nephew. Surely your own good sense would have told you this without my informing you of it."

Hilda's spirit rose as she answered: "I did offer to release Roger from the engagement, Mrs. Palmer, but he refused. I dare say he did, foolish, headstrong boy!" rejoined the old lady. "But I told him this morning, when he mentioned the subject to me, that unless he consented to be guided by my wishes I would alter my will and leave all my money to the County Hospital."

"And what did he say?" asked poor Hilda, eagerly.

"Say? Oh, he talked a great deal of sentiment on the subject, said he considered himself bound to fulfil his engagement, talked grandly of working for his wife, and when I asked him what he proposed to do he bounced out of the room in a rage."

"Dear Roger!" murmured Hilda, tenderly.

"Foolish Roger, I say!" interrupted the irate lady. "Why, what is he fit for? He has no profession, no means of earning a living. He told me he would take a gamekeeper's place, or enlist, sooner than give you up; but I think I know you better than to suppose you would drag the man you profess to love down to poverty. Surely Hilda, you will never hold him to his promise? If you do, I will discard him from my heart, and under no circumstances shall he have a penny of my money."

"But why? What have I done?" asked the unhappy girl.

"Nothing, Hilda," answered Mrs. Palmer, gravely. "You are the innocent victim of the sins of your parents. It is not your loss of fortune—that I could overlook; but I will never consent to my nephew marrying a woman nameless and disgraced as you are. Had the squire's death taken place one day later you would have been Roger's wife, and I must have submitted to the inevitable, though I think it would have broken my heart: as it is, I am quite determined that I will never consent to the marriage. Stop"—for Hilda was about to speak—"entreaties are of no avail. If your father had provided for you—as it was his duty to do—of course my nephew could have done as he pleased, but how long do you think you would be happy together, if you saw him a beggar, deprived of you of all the comforts and luxuries to which he has all his life been accustomed? Come, Hilda, do not let your selfishness ruin the man you love. Renounce Roger of your own free will, and I will provide for your future. I will give you such a sum of money as will render you independent, and—"

"Stop, Mrs. Palmer!" exclaimed the girl, "you have said enough. I will take no bribe to give up the man I love better than life itself; but I will not be the cause of his ruin—the victory is yours, you have conquered. Explain it to Roger in the best way you are able, and give him this," drawing from her finger the diamond ring which had been placed there by her happy lover on their betrothal day. And without another word Hilda turned and left the room, leaving the old lady to find her way down stairs and to her carriage as best she could.

When Hilda reached her own room, the tears which she had with difficulty repressed during her interview with Mrs. Palmer burst forth, and throwing herself face downward upon the embroidered satin coverlet of her bed, the unhappy girl gave vent to her grief. And, indeed, the

poor orphan had good cause for tears. Reft, at one blow, of father, name and fortune, she had now to drain to the dregs the cup of bitterness, and to find herself despised by her friends and parted forever from that fond, true-hearted lover whom she loved so dearly, so unselfishly. One thought alone, amid the tumult of her soul, found place in Hilda's breast, and it was that of instant flight! She felt that she dared not remain within reach of Roger's tender pleading, for she judged the young man aright and knew that he would never agree to give her up. And the heroic, self-sacrificing love which had supported her in the presence of Mrs. Palmer, would, she feared, be as flax in the fire of Roger's passionate pleadings.

No, she could no longer remain at the Abbey, and she determined to leave it alone, and secretly, that very night. The resolution no sooner was made than she proceeded to act upon it. Rising from her couch and pushing away the wayward tangles of her hair off her tear-stained face, Hilda commenced her preparations for her departure forever from her father's roof. They were few and simple. She packed into as small a compass as possible a couple of changes of linen and some necessary articles for the toilet. These she deposited in a morocco leather bag. Fortunately, she had an ample sum of money, in notes and gold; placing ten sovereigns in her purse, she made the rest of her money into a parcel, to go into the richly fitted dressing-bag, which, adorned with her monogram in pink coral and pearls, had been one of her father's wedding presents. A bitter trial it was to Hilda to separate her own valuable jewelry from that which had been the gifts of her lover, as well as wedding presents from friends and acquaintances. She piled the costly trinkets upon a shelf in her wardrobe, and placed upon the top of the pile a brief note to Mr. Wentworth requesting him to be so kind as to return the gifts to the different friends who had offered them to the heiress of Marham Abbey.

Her own jewelry, which represented a small fortune, she packed in her dressing-bag. She left untouched the large boxes and cases which contained her costly wedding trousseau, placing in readiness a sealskin coat and cap, which, with a large fur-lined cloak, she intended to wear upon her journey. By the time her preparations were completed it was past three o'clock, and, glancing at her watch, Hilda found that she would have ample leisure to pay a brief visit to the park and look once more upon the scenes where the drama of her life had been played out. It was a bitterly cold afternoon, and muffled in her costly furs, Hilda descended the grand staircase. No obsequious footman was waiting in the hall to attend as of yore to her slightest wish, and Hilda left the house and proceeded into the gardens without having been seen by any of the servants. She made the tour of the conservatories and hothouses, in which she had taken such pride, plucking a few fragile blossoms and delicate ferns to accompany her into exile. Who would ever love those exquisite flowers as she had done, she thought, as she took her lonely way to the Queen's spring, where, in the golden Summer weather, she had been clasped to Roger's heart, and listened to his words of love. As she stood leaning against the marble balustrade, and watching the frozen waters at her feet, the fragments of a song which her lover used to sing in his ringing baritone voice came sadly to her memory. How changed her fate had been since those words of undying love had sounded in her ears.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Practical.



Farmer Jones—What hev yer learned at yer college, son?
Son—Why, Dad! I can throw the hammer further than any one there.
Farmer Jones—That's good. I guess yer'll hev no trouble in gettin' er job in er blacksmith's shop then.

Fatal Gunshot Caused by the Sun.

The story runs that a man was found lying dead upon a couch, his life having been destroyed by a bullet discharged from a gun lying near. The circumstances of the matter positively proved that the case could not have been one of suicide, and, therefore, the only alternative which could be reasonably suggested was that he had been murdered. An acquaintance was charged with the crime, but absolute proof of guilt not forthcoming. One of the parties engaged in the case was so far interested in the peculiar facts of the death as to seek a different solution of the affair than that accepted by popular belief. The result of his observation and deduction was very curious. The rays of the sun had strained in at the window of the apartment in which the man had encountered his end, and had been concentrated direct upon the explosive chamber of the gun, by which means warm the cap and powder had engendered a discharge. The gun having been quite inadvertently placed in such a way as to point to the unfortunate man, he received the bullet while he lay placidly sleeping, no doubt meeting with instant death.

Done by a Blind Painter.

A most wonderful bit of work. Those things were painted by a blind painter. What were they?
Those blinds.

SOME LATE CABLE NEWS.

THE QUEEN GIVES A SITTING TO MR. BELL-SMITH.

A Gift From the Amir—The Queen and the Photographer—An Explosion of Gas—A Riot in Bombay—Visiting Windsor Castle, etc., etc.

A despatch from London says:—The Court Circular says that the Queen has given Mr. Bell-Smith a sitting for her portrait. Her Majesty will appear in a historic picture representing her in the act of placing a wreath upon the coffin of Sir John Thompson, the late Canadian Premier.

Mr. Downey, the Royal photographer, when asked how the Queen sat for her latest photograph, replied: "Like other folks. When I had settled her I said:—'Would Your Majesty put on a more favourable countenance?' She said, 'Certainly,' and put it on."

An explosion of gas took place on board the steamship Barbadian, British, at Swansea, from Liverpool June 26, via Swansea, for New Orleans. The second engineer was fatally injured and three firemen seriously burned.

Five cloth mills situated near Leeds have been closed, owing to a dispute regarding wages. The closing of the mills affects 2,000 persons.

An official telegram received here from Bombay says that owing to the clashing of a Hindoo marriage procession with some natives taking part in a Mohammedan feast at Porbandar, on the Kattywar peninsula, the former attacked the Mohammedans and drove them from their mosque. The troops eventually repressed the rioting after several hours of serious disturbance. Three of the rioters were killed, and 184, chiefly Mohammedans, were wounded.

Specially favored visitors were recently allowed to penetrate the Queen's boudoir at Windsor castle. Its state has remained unaltered since her Majesty's widowhood. On the door is inscribed:—"Every article in this room my deeply-lamented husband selected for me in the 24th year of his reign." The Queen's bridal wreath, with the first bouquet, Prince Albert sent to her, lies withered within a glass case, and on every side are evidences of thoughtful devotion of the Prince Consort to her Majesty.

The casket that Nasrulla Khan presented to the Queen from the Amir of Afghanistan is a marvel of art. It is 18 inches long by 15 inches high. It is encrusted with large Lapis lazuli, and is encrusted with large diamonds, rubies, and emeralds. From the four top corners spring stars containing 612 brilliant-cut diamonds. The value of the whole is £17,000. The Queen in return sent a gold plate service and other presents of equal value. Nasrulla Khan will leave England on July 15.

Francis Clark, who succeeded the late John Brown as the Queen's personal attendant, is dead.

One of the few extant manuscript copies of Wyckliffe's Bible, illuminated on vellum was sold at Sotheby's last week for £1,150, which is said to be a record price.

Was Wondering.

Little Jack—Where are you goin' this summer, Mr. Softchapp?
Mr. Softchapp—Um—why do you ask?
Little Jack—Sis said when she found out where you was goin', she'd know where to go, and I was wonderin' where Sis wasn't goin'.
Mr. Softchapp—Is your sister still in the city?
Little Jack—Yes, but she is goin' away for the summer as soon as she finds out where you're goin'.
Indeed! So she wishes to go where I go!
No. She wants to go somewhere else.

No Fault of His.

And now will somebody in the audience accommodate me with the loan of a cavalry sword? asked the professor of magic, stepping to the front of the stage and rubbing his hands in pleasant anticipation. There was no response. The professor repeated his request. Same result. I am sorry, he said at last, after waiting several minutes, that I shall be unable to perform my advertised feat of swallowing a sword, but you will see, ladies and gentlemen, that it is not my fault. I will now proceed with the wonderful performance of the magic egg bag, etc.

Tools' Latest.

The other day Mr. Toole entered a dairy, and in his most solemn manner addressed himself to the man as follows: "I will take a boy, looking around at the shelves. A boy?" asked the dairyman, fairly puzzled. "Yes, or a girl, answered the actor. The man, thinking him somewhat lunatic, said: "Pardon me, this is a milk shop. Come outside," said Mr. Toole, and taking the man by the arm led him to the door and pointed to the sign. "I'll take a boy and a girl, repeated the humorist, with not a ghost of a smile. Read what your notice states Families applied in any quantity!"

Where They Stay.

Mother (arranging for the summer)—I want the girls to go to some place where the nicest men are, of course.
Father—Then, my dear, you had better let them stay in town.

Long Engagements Preferred.

Edith—So you prefer a long engagement. Well, I wouldn't.
Blanche—If you liked theaters as well as I do, you would.

One of the curious facts but recently noted by the biologists and physiologists is that men have a red corpuscles in their blood than women have.