



"KYRA,"
OR,
The Ward of the Earl of Vering.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Conclusion.

A couch, covered with furs, had been drawn beside the fireplace, and a little alcove, made of screens, served to back up the throne—for no queen's ascension to a throne aroused profounder joy among her subjects than did Kyra's return to life, and the ways of life, among the members of the Grange household.

Excitement reigned below and above stairs; a calm and a joyous serenity were to be found in the bedroom in which the heroine of the county was being invested with her dainty satin dressing-robe. At last, leaning upon the loving arm of her sister, Mary Morival, she descended the broad stairs and made her half-way journey back to life again.

At the door of the luxurious little room she turned to Charlie and asked him, with a smile, if she might look over the balustrade.

"Yes, if you like," said outspoken Charlie; "but you won't see him; he is in the library waiting for permission to come up."

Whereupon, Kyra blushed a vivid crimson and retreated within the room, and Lady Mary indignantly pushed the too-candid youth downstairs. Then ensued that delicious quarter of an hour when the convalescent looked round the room and admired the old, familiar objects which she never expected to see again, and learns how sweet life is, and of how much enjoyment she is still capable. It is a short, sweet quarter of an hour, and then, as Kyra leans back with a happy sigh and closed eyes, Lady Mary steals out of the room, and Percy steals in and takes her place. No need to raise the white, languid lids, with their long, dark fringe; she knows who has come; the mystic, sympathetic thrill has run through her, and she lies incapable of anything but a sweet, longing blush.

Percy stands and devours her with his eyes for a brief, sweet moment, then bends over her and takes her to his heart.

"Kyra, Kyra, look up! I am here!" Very slowly she opens her eyes, and fixes that old, sweet look of divine tenderness and passion upon him.

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"Percy, I have come back to you!" "Yes!" he whispers. "Ahl! but have you? or is it only a dream; shall we both wake the next minute?" She holds out her long, graceful arms with an ineffable smile.

"Yes? Then wake here!" And, as he sinks on one knee beside her, she it is who takes him to her heart, and lays his face upon the little red scarf, which is the living seal of her love.

They have changed places from henceforth. It is he who is glorified and succored by her love; it is she who makes all the world seem sweet to him, and the days one dream of joy.

It is she who plots for his comfort and happiness; who lies awake of nights that she may think, in the quietude of the stars, of the great joy that has befallen her. These two will never sink into the dull dreariness of the commonplace married couple; not while the remembrance of those white plains and faraway forests serves to bring before them the birth of their passion and the forecast of their happiness.

There is no elixir of life unto love, and it is only with life that the love of Percy and Kyra will close.

THE END.

WHEN LOVE Came Too Late.

CHAPTER I.

Something of a Mystery.

"At all events, you have got your price for it," said Mr. Vanley, as if rather tired of the subject, "and I"—with a grave smile—"should in all probability have beaten you down."

"I'd rather you had bought it at half the price," murmured Mr. Sparrow, meekly.

"Well, well," said Mr. Vanley, almost impatiently. "It is too late now, and—there's an end of the matter." He turned to the pair at the piano, and regarded them for a moment. "I shall be in the library if you want to see me before you go, Bradstone," he said.

Bartley Bradstone looked over his shoulder carelessly—too carelessly for a young man addressing his senior.

"All right," he said, "I'll look in as I go."

CHAPTER II.

"The Cherub."

Mr. Vanley was not only Bartley Bradstone's senior, but his superior in looks and status.

The Vanleys had held Hawkwood Grange for centuries, and there was no name better known in Devonshire than that which the squire bore. Twice a baronetage and once a peerage had been offered to the Vanleys; but to a Vanley the old English and old Devonshire title of "Squire" was too dear to be exchanged for any other, though it might be higher rank; and so Squire Vanley, the master of the Grange, refused, and certainly was not the less respected for his refusal of a peerage.

While as to Mr. Bartley Bradstone, as the French wit remarked, "He may have had a grandfather, but no one has yet been found credulous enough to believe it!"

Five years before this notable afternoon, Mr. Bradstone had purchased an estate within three miles of the Grange. Perhaps it would be as well to be exact, and explain that he had loaned money on the place, and, foreclosing, got possession of it.

An old, but rather ramshackle house stood upon it—a house quite large enough for a bachelor, by the way—but Mr. Bradstone pulled it down, and in its place built a huge mansion which, by its highly florid architecture, was far more suitable to South Kensington than North Devon.

It was a tremendous place, all gables and turrets, and being built of red brick, with white stone facings, was terribly conspicuous. Olivia had remarked, the first time she saw it, which happened to be on a blazing hot day, that "no one ought to look upon it, except through green spectacles." And she added that it would

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be useful in winter—to warm one's hands at!

The interior was decorated and furnished in strict accordance with the very latest canons of the very latest art craze; and, as if to atone for the red glare of the exterior, the inside was cold and repelling.

Mr. Bartley Bradstone, however, considered it perfection; and here he settled down. The country people were shy of him at first. Devonshire is celebrated for apples, cider and—exclusiveness. Nothing was known of the newcomer, excepting that he was rich; there was no doubt about that—immense rich; and those who had been thrown into his company were not prepossessed by him. There was that look in his eyes, for one thing; and, for another, with all his careful dressing and studiously "correct" manners, Mr. Bartley Bradstone did not seem, to the very particular country people, to be—well, exactly a gentleman.

But after a time the squire, who had met him once or twice in the market town, seen him at church, touched his hat to him at the meet—of course the squire was the master of the hounds—at last the squire made a formal call upon Mr. Bartley Bradstone at The Maples, as he called the red monstrosity.

That which was good enough for Squire Vanley was, of course, good enough for the rest of the country people, and Mr. Bartley Bradstone was not only asked out to dinner, but, greater honor still, had the gratification of seeing the best people of the neighborhood round his own—new—mahogany.

He gave good dinners—too good, it was whispered; too many covers, too many wines, with too much plate, and too many servants.

"It's a pity," remarked Lord Carfield to the squire, as they walked home after one of Mr. Bartley's dinners, "that there is no one to caution these parvenus against overdoing it. Give you my word, Vanley, I felt all the evening as if I were dining at one of those new hotels in London, where they give you twelve courses, served in a gaudy room, all gilt and white paint, and play music at you all the time. I suppose you have twice as much plate? I have some"—the Carfield plate was the boast of that part of Devonshire—"but we never think of making a silversmith's counter of our dinner-table every time we ask a neighbor to dinner."

"He means well," said the squire. "Just so," said the old lord. "That makes it all the worse. It's a hopeless case."

They were near neighbors, and an intimacy sprang up between Mr. Bartley Bradstone, the millionaire, and the Squire of Hawkwood. The young man would ride over—on a long park horse, which he rode abominably!—to the Grange in the morning, and was often easily persuaded to stop to lunch. Sometimes he would remain to dinner, a servant being sent to The Maples for Mr. Bradstone's evening clothes. Miss Amelia quite liked him, and the squire, as has been said, was intimate with him; but he made no way with Olivia. From the first moment she had seen him, when her frank eyes had rested upon his restless, shifting ones, she had kept him at a distance, so to speak.

If her father had brought home the village sweep to dinner, she would have treated him courteously and extended a welcome to him; and that is all she did to Bartley Bradstone.

White he—! He was as much in love with Olivia Vanley as utterly selfish man can be, and he had sworn to himself that he would have her. Now, Bartley Bradstone, though he was not a gentleman, though he overdid, gave too elaborate dinners, and made occasional mistakes in etiquette, was both rich and clever. The man who had bought him for a fool would have lost his money. Olivia, who despised him, was wrong in doing so. She should have been on her guard and—feared him. All the while Mr. Sparrow was repeating his story to Mr. Vanley, Bartley Bradstone was talking in an undertone to her.

"It's just a simple picnic, a rough affair, but I'll promise you shan't be bored, Miss Vanley," he said. "The squire is coming, and he told me—that is, he said I might ask you. I hope you will come. Lord Carfield is coming, and has promised to bring his son, Viscount Granville. Lord Granville arrives at his father's to-night. You know him—the viscount, I mean?"

"Bertie Granville? Oh, yes. 'The Cherub,' as he is called."

"That's the man," said Bartley Bradstone, with a faint flush. He would not have dared to call him "Bertie" or "The Cherub." "Well, he is coming, and I hope to persuade Miss Amelia, too. But the whole thing will be spoilt if you refuse."

Olivia looked at him from under her lids—the look which makes a man—that is, if he has a sensitive skin—feel as if he had been struck by a whip. "I don't quite see how my absence could spoil your picnic, Mr. Bradstone," she said, coldly.

He lowered his restless eyes, and caught at his upper lip with his teeth. They were whole and even, but rather too large.

"I mean that it would be spoilt for me," he said, and added, nervously, "and—for the rest, of course. Please say 'Yes,' Miss Vanley."

Olivia looked straight before her, with that expression in her eyes which belongs to the unfettered maiden spirit. "I will see," she said, calmly. "You are not listening to Mr. Sparrow's story, Mr. Bradstone."

He was too wise to press her further, and at once turned away toward the old lawyer, and listened to him for a moment or two; then he turned to the door with a contemptuous laugh.

"You've sold your property to some fellow who is in hiding from his tailor, Mr. Sparrow," he said. "Pity you didn't sell it to me; I'd have given you twice the sum for it this man has given. Shouldn't be surprised if we had the police down here directly looking for him. 'Pon my word, you ought to be more careful, Mr. Sparrow," and with a patronizing nod he left the room, pausing for a minute or two to present his invitation to Miss Amelia.

This last straw broke down Mr. Sparrow's back, and shortly afterward he took himself off, feeling that he had, by selling his property to the mysterious unknown, not only offended his neighbor, but actually lost money!

(To be Continued.)

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