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LADY IRIS' MISTAKE; or the Hero of 'Surata'

CHAPTER XXVIII. From Lady Iris' face, when at length he saw it, he could glean nothing; there was no gleam to her decision. He was startled by her pallor, but remembered that she had been ill. She was deathly pale, even her lips were white, and the violet eyes were so shadowed as to look almost black. There was something solemn in her aspect, as of one who had passed through a terrible ordeal and had the memory of it clinging to her still. He went forward to meet her, and she held out her hand to him.

"You are first, Allan," she said, with a gentle plying smile. "I hope you have not waited long for me." "I have not thought of time," he replied. "I would stand for hours if I could but see you for one moment!" "She did not smile as she had passed through a terrible ordeal and had the memory of it clinging to her still. He went forward to meet her, and she held out her hand to him.

"Poor Allan!" she murmured; and then his heart sank. "My doom is coming," he said. "Let me bear it bravely." He knelt in the long grass, raised his face to hers, which was so full of pity and love, and read his fate. "Pride has conquered love, Iris," he said, gently.

"If you will put it so, Allan, I love you, but I cannot give up the traditions of my race. I cannot go against my instincts and my long training. I love you dearly; but I can never marry you—no, my love, never!" He bent his head for a few moments, and then looked up at her. "And this is final, Iris, my love? No prayers, tears, or pleading of mine can ever change your decision?" "No," she answered; "they would only give me pain."

"I will not do that; I will never cause you pain," he said—"I would give my life to save you from it. Then I am to release you from your promise, tell you that it does not bind you?"

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"It must be so, Allan, I have thought it over; I could not marry you, dear, now that I know— You understand. I should not like it. The Faynes, when they have married, have never cast even the faintest shadow on their name. It has been held with honor, and so it must remain."

"You think I could not hold it with honor, Iris?" "We will not discuss that, Allan. You yourself are one of the noblest of men. The difficulty has reference to your birth. I tell you frankly that I cannot give into the hands of a tradesman's son all the glories of my house and name."

"I am answered," he said, proudly. "I submit to my fate. I do not complain; a day may come when you will see more clearly." His face flushed, and his eyes flashed. "I will tell you what your words incite me to do, Lady Iris. The son of a tradesman, to whom you could not intrust your name, shall make one for himself, one that all England shall honor—all save you!"

To his amazement she put her arms round his neck, and her face, wet with tears, was hidden on his breast. "Oh, Allan, Allan," she cried, "we must not quarrel, you and I! It is as though we were both dying. We must not quarrel, dear; this is our last meeting. When it is over I shall be as one dead; the ghost of myself will drag on a miserable life for some time longer, but the bright, happy Iris Fayne, who loved you, will be no more."

"Then, my darling, if it distresses you so greatly," he said, "why do it?" "I must," she replied. "There is no help for it, Allan. I love you well, but I cannot be untrue to my whole life. Oh, Allan, do not tempt me—you must see that my whole heart is tortured; I should never be happy, even if I could bring my mind to marry you; I should repent it directly. I know myself, Allan, and I can judge."

"Yes, my darling, I believe you. It shall be as you will." He loved her so well that he could not bear to see her in distress, even though that distress was brought about by her dismissal of him, and he could not help soothing and caressing her. "I must not do it," she went on; "but my heart tempts me sorely, and you must help me to be strong."

"I will not seek to persuade you, Iris. It shall be as you will." She clung to him in a passion of grief that he never forgot. "No matter what happens," she said, "we must not meet again. I could not bear to meet you, to look into your face, to listen to your voice, and know that we could be nothing to each other. We must not meet again, Allan."

"You say that very lightly, Iris!" he cried bitterly. "Heaven knows that I do not!" she said. "The words are a death-knell to me. Oh, Allan, listen, my love—listen! Do not think my pain is less than yours. It is as great as any human heart can bear and yet live. I love you truly; I have never loved any one but you, and I never shall. I shall be the last of the Faynes of Chandos. When you think of me, do not think of me as a woman enjoying her life and the flattery of lovers—and the happiness of love; there will be none of these things for me. Think of me always as true to you, as loving you, as living alone for your sake!" "But, my darling, of what use is all this if you will not be my wife?" "It is of no use; yet I cannot help it," she replied. "I must love you always, and be true to you always. I could not be anything else."

Iris, if it be greater than your love!" he said. "Yes, it is great; it is not only pride, but it is the habit of my life, and I cannot change it now, Allan. I should be most miserable if I married you; and when you saw that I was not happy, you would be the same. I shall go to my grave unmarried, Allan, since I cannot marry you. Now, my dear lost love, we must part!"

He clasped her to his breast and kissed her passionately, while his tears fell like rain upon her face. She had never seemed to him so beautiful or so tender as in this hour when he had to leave her. She raised her face to his, all wet with tears.

"It is like dying," she said. "If you were lying in your coffin, Allan, I should kiss you and say, 'Farewell, beautiful eyes, that have always looked kindly on me; farewell, sweet lips, that have stolen my heart from me by kisses and tender words; farewell, gentle hands, that will never touch mine!' I should kiss—as I kiss now, the forehead, the lips, and the hands, and I should cover the face of my dead—Ah, Heaven, my heart will break. Let me die!"

She dropped upon the mossy grass, crying as if her heart would break. He bent over her. "Iris," he said gently, "it is madness for you to send me from you when you love me so well; you will kill yourself and me too!"

"Even that," she cried, "would be better than to lower the dignity of the Faynes! Oh, Allan, Allan, go now—leave me!" "Let me give you one kiss, Iris," he entreated—"one that pledges my truth to you, although you send me away and we may never meet again—one that pledges my love to you and to no other for evermore!"

He raised her from the grass, and kissed her lips, not once, but many times, with all the passion of his love, and the force of his despair. "It must be," she said, despairingly. "Oh, Allan, kiss me once more! Let it be the pledge of this time of love that will never die, and a farewell! Do not speak to me after that; but let me always remember the pledge! Go while I have the strength to bear it!"

He knew that further entreaties would be vain; he saw that even if she killed herself in doing it she would leave him. He kissed her once more; and then he left her. He knew not whether he wandered or what he did. The sky seemed to have darkened and a gloom to have overspread everything; there was nothing left for him in life—no hope, no love. He wandered through the woods; and, when the darkness of night fell over the earth, he was still alone in his desolation.

(To be continued.)

Decisive Crimean Battle. The Battle of Inkerman, fought November 5, 1854, was the most important encounter in the Crimean War, and the losses on both sides were very heavy in proportion to the numbers concerned. But those of the Russians were by far the greatest. Altogether they lost 12,000 men, four times as many as that of the troops with which the English Second Division met the attack. The English lost 597 killed, 1,360 wounded; the French 143 men killed and 786 wounded. The victory, however, was worth the cost to the allies. For them, with nothing behind them except the sea cliffs, or the difficulties leading to the narrow harbours, defeat would have been absolute and ruinous; and behind such defeat lay national dishonor. On the other hand, as Sir E. Hamley points out, when the crisis was past, the fate of Sevastopol really was decided. It is true that the besiegers' misfortunes grew worse, and that six weeks later most of the horses were rotting in a sea of mud, most of the men who fought at Inkerman, filling hospitals at Scutari or graves on the plain. The extraordinary misery that the besieging armies endured is indeed the outstanding fact of the campaign. But when Inkerman showed that the Russians could not beat the invaders in battle, the latter were certain to win because it was impossible for them to embark in the face of the enemy. They could do nothing else but keep their hold, and that kept it was demonstrable that the Powers commanding the sea must prevail over the Power whose theatre of war was separated by roadless deserts from its resources. Such were the consequences that hung in the balance each time that the Russian columns came crowding on, while their long lines of artillery swept the ridge; and it was due to the constancy and steadfastness of the outnumbered battalions at Inkerman that the invasion of the Crimea did not prove the most disastrous expedition in our history.

Dr. F. Stafford & Son, Wholesale and Retail Chemists and Druggists, St. John's, Oct 31, 1922.

English Girls Turn to Simple Weddings. LONDON.—Old fashioned weddings at church with lavish decorations, gaily bedecked brides and bridesmaids, bells ringing and elaborate ceremonies, are gradually giving way to more sombre and quicker weddings at registry offices. Statistics show that twenty-five per cent. of the total marriages in this country during the year have been performed at registry offices. In London alone of 50,000 marriages, 15,000 were conducted by the registrar; and throughout the country the number of civil ceremonies has grown from 30,000 in 1896 to three times that number. Among many reasons given for favoring the civil marriage is the desire to avoid publicity by contracting parties, particularly in the case of divorcees, theatrical stars and other prominent persons when marrying. English brides of the past generation would have been aghast at the thought of marrying without the proverbial orange blossom wreath and the redness of bridesmaids, but broadening ideas in the days of intimate salves, developed by the present day girl, make her prefer the simple ceremony without the "fussiness" of the big church service and the array of spectators.

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