

One in a Thousand, BUT TRUE TO THE LAST

CHAPTER XII.

(Continued.)

"I am eighteen," I say, with dignity; "at least, I shall be so very soon."

"Oh, here are the gentlemen!" she says, with a flutter, evidently expecting that Adrian will rush up to her at once.

But he does nothing of the sort. He lingers a few minutes with Mrs. Herbert, and presently comes leisurely across the room to us.

"Mrs. Herbert hopes you are going to sing for us," he says, bending down to my companion.

"Oh, yes—certainly!"

She takes his arm, and, as they turn away, he looks at me in such a comical way that I would give anything to laugh right out. But I repress the desire. After a good deal of mincing, she begins. The song is pretty and the voice sweet, but the only words I hear are those of the refrain:

"When night is darkest,
Dawn is nearest."

I have never heard it before; it is one of those little, sweet, commonplace songs of which one hears so many during the year, and yet what a truth it conveys! We do not see it, and when others remind us of it, we will not believe it. We firmly believe, and assure ourselves, that no night ever was so dark as our night, and that the dawn never can or will come.

I am afraid of getting dreamy, for I have utterly forgotten that I am in Mrs. Herbert's drawing room, until Adrian tells me the carriage is waiting.

"Good-by, dear Lady Charteris," says our hostess, blandly. "I hope you'll enjoy yourself very much in Devonshire."

I catch the old-young lady's eye as we are leaving the room, and I fancy she will not forgive me very soon for not telling her who I am. I wish I had done so.

"Well, thank goodness," exclaims Adrian, when we are in the carriage, "we shall have no more dinner parties for a long time."

"Whom did you take in?" I ask.

"Haven't the least idea, except that she was the daughter of the fat man who sat next to you."

"What a pity he cannot give her a little bit of his fat!" I say, thought-

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fully. "What an improvement it would be to both of them!"

"Would it not? And, while they were about it, a little of his stolidity for as much of her gush."

"Was she very gushing?" I ask, with a little laugh.

"Awfully so. She actually asked me if I ever wrote poetry!"

The idea sets me off laughing, for the very look of Adrian is enough to tell one that he is no poet. Then I tell him what she said about him after the dinner, and we joke and make very merry over this old-young lady who wants a poet, a baronet and an athlete rolled into one.

CHAPTER XIII.

A LETTER FROM LOYS.

We leave London early in the morning, and are soon speeding on our way to our second honeymoon. How am I going to enjoy it—nay, how I do enjoy it; for we have secured a carriage to ourselves! We have four foot warmers, two fur rugs, all the illustrated papers and an immense sack of lollipops, and, best of all, here is no Theo coming in to make me miserable or carry my husband away from under my very nose.

Our journey is a long one, for our destination is Torquay; but I do not find it tedious, for I have Adrian all to myself—once more, and the only car I have is that some unprincipled person may invade our carriage, and make him or herself disagreeable. The longest railway journey must come to an end, and our does at last,

without our having a travelling companion the whole way. We are dreadfully hungry, and cry out loudly for food the instant we reach our hotel; and, having satisfied the cravings of our inner beings, we saily forth to look about us.

Oh, the bliss of the days that follow! I feel as if that last week in London must be a hideous nightmare—nay, I even laugh at myself for having been so foolish as to trouble about it. I do not try to explain that conversation I overheard at the opera. I simply put it away from me, and do not think of it at all. I resign myself to the happiness of the present, and make no attempt to unveil the future, or to rake up the past. It is a grand plan; I firmly believe that half the happiness we might enjoy is lost through anxious forethought for the morrow or fretful repinings for what is gone.

I propose to Adrian that we avoid making acquaintances of any sort whatsoever.

"Because you know," I say, "there are lots of idle people about here, who will try to join us wherever we go; and we don't want them."

"Then, I think we had better leave this," he says, with a laugh, "and find out some quiet, little village, where there are no visitors at all."

"Ye-es," I answer, doubtfully; "but then, the squire will make a point of calling, and the parson, and very likely the doctor; and, besides those drawbacks, we shan't get anything decently cooked."

"You gormand!" exclaims my husband.

But, indeed, I am not such. I was thinking more of him than myself. He tells me that is what women always say. So we remain at Torquay, and every day make pilgrimages to the places of interest within reach. Adrian is fortunate enough to hear of a small yacht, and that makes us very independent, for we are under no fear of tourists. Yet, happy as I am here, I am not permitted to remain so. Into my bed of rose leaves there comes one that is crumpled, for I got a letter. It is not from Theo, for, as I have not written to her, she does not know our address; it is from Loys.

"How on earth did Loys find us out?" I say, pettantly, to Adrian.

"Teddy got it out of the orderly room, of course," he answers, looking up from his paper.

"The orderly room?" I say, blankly.

"Of course, little stupid. All the fellows that are on leave have to telegraph their address, to be put up in the orderly room."

"What a nuisance!" I comment.

"Grant you there," he laughs.

"Whom is your letter from? Loys, did you say?"

"Yes."

"It's a long one. I wonder what on earth she can have found to fill all that?"

"Let me fill your cup before I begin," I say; "for to read all this will take some time."

"At last I begin, and the letter runs thus:—"

"My Dearest Audrey: I think Theo must have taken leave of her senses—I knew it was something to do with Theo—for she has written me to-day, and actually proposes coming down to stay with us in the course of a few days. Now, my dear sister, it is the very best part of the season, or, at least, it will be, or she proposes staying a few weeks." Oh, no! Theo is not out of her senses, I think! "Whatever am I to do with Theo during all that time? You know, Audrey, how quiet we are. When you were staying with us, we were exceptionally gay, for here were the Yeomanry and our own balls, and a few concerts, and so on; but now there is absolutely nothing at all going on. Hardly any of the officers are at home, it being leave season. Indeed, poor, dear Teddy has been on duty three days during the last week, and we are the only married people here. I am thoroughly perplexed; for, though, of course, we have a room, still, it is only a soldier's shakedown, as Teddy calls it, and not at all the sort of place to offer Theo, who has become very grand. I really don't know what she can be thinking of! Do think she has quarrelled with Lassels? Still, if that were the case, I should imagine she would go home to her father for a while. I cannot understand it. Baby grows lovelier every day, and more like his father, and has another tooth. Write and tell me you know what Theo is after."

"Love to Adrian. Your loving, Loys Vincent."

"Why, baby, what a dismal face!" laughs Adrian. "Loys must have had very bad news to communicate."

"Very," I say, shortly.

"Well, what is it?"

"Theo has written to say that she'll visit them for a few weeks."

"The deuce!" begins Adrian, then breaks off suddenly. "Oh, you mean asking Loys to visit her?"

"No, I don't. I mean that Theo is going to Idleminster."

"Why?"

"How should I know?" I say, crossly. "I suppose she will be coming to us continually. She won't want to stay with Loys."

"I think I'll telegraph at once to take this place I got an offer of this morning," says he, after a moment's silence.

"What is that?"

"Hebden Hall. We can have it as long as the regiment stays at Idleminster, and it is five miles out."

"Out of the town?" I ask.

"Exactly. Then, you see, we shall have some chance of being by ourselves."

"Then let us go round to the office

at once," I say, rising, "and secure it before we go anywhere else."

"I suppose Loys is delighted!" observes Adrian, during the day.

"Indeed, she is not," I reply. "Is it likely, in a small house like theirs, with nothing going on, and nowhere to go, that she wants a fashionable woman like Theo turning up her nose at everything? Theo, with her French cook and half a dozen footmen, eating a dinner prepared by a woman and waited on by a soldier servant! Loys may well be dismayed at such a prospect."

"It's always so awfully flat in the leave season, and all the best people round about are in town, of course."

"I don't get over my annoyance all day," and, when we come in, there is a telegram lying on the table; it really seems like the culminating point to my vexation.

"A telegram! That's to recall me, I suppose," says Adrian, impatiently, as he opens it. But I see by his face that it is of more importance.

"What is it? Bad news?"

"Very, my darling."

"It is daddy!" I say, in faltering accents.

"No," answers Adrian, gravely; "it is Lassels, and Theo is a widow."

(To be Continued.)

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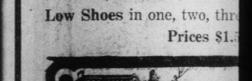
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