

**Plot That Failed;
OR,
Love That Would
Not Be Denied.**

CHAPTER XXV.

For a moment he forgot that he was disguised, for the moment his face flushed, his hand clinched, his lip curled with scorn and contempt, but the next, as Howard Murpoint's eyes met his smilingly and unconsciously, he remembered all, and stepped aside. In doing so he pressed rather heavily against a lady. With a low and hurried "Pardon me!" he turned and looked upon Violet Mildmay!

"This time it was the blood left his cheek, and he staggered. Violet thought that her long train had inconvenienced the tall old gentleman.

"I am very sorry; but the rooms are so crowded," she said, in her sweet, gentle voice.

The tears sprang into Leicester's eyes, his heart leaped as if it would spring from his body, his arms were half extended; but, with another smile, Violet had passed on.

Then a great and terrible feeling of loneliness and desertion came upon him, and he crept back into a corridor all dazed and dreamy.

Round him were the promenaders, about him the exquisite music floating through the perfumed air, the voices of the guests; about all the serene, soft, falsely sweet tones of the villainous schemer; and within him the consciousness that Violet—the woman he loved best in all the world—was near him!

CHAPTER XXVI.

For the first few moments Bertie's sensations on reading Lord Lackland's letter were anything but distinct, then gradually, as he realized the blow which the earl's duplicity had dealt him, indignation predominated.

He had been basely deceived and betrayed, and his betrayal was rendered all the more bitter by the forerunner which he had been allowed to have of his happiness.

He wandered listlessly down to his club.

In the smoking-room, to which he repaired, he found Fitz extended at full length, sipping a brandy and soda.

He determined on the spur of the moment to confide in him.

"Hello, Bert," said Fitz. "What have you done with my nag?"

"Taken him to the stable," said Bert. "I suppose you half feared that I had bolted?"

"No," said Fitz. "What is in the wind? No mischief, I hope."

"Fitz," said Bertie, seating himself beside the good-natured Fitz, "I'm in trouble."

"No!" exclaimed Fitz. "I thought that nothing ever troubled you, Bert."

"Something does now," said Bertie, gravely. "It's about Lady Boisdale—Ethel."

Fitz shook his head gravely.

"I was half afraid there was something on there, Bert, between you and Ethel. I've noticed it for some time, and I thought perhaps you'd speak. I wish you had, because I could have told you that there was no chance for you."

Bertie colored.

"No," said Fitz, heartily. "Nothing would give me greater pleasure; but it can't be, Bert. Look here, one secret is as good as another. There's nobody listening, is there? I'll tell you something," and he sighed deeply. "Ethel and I are as much slaves as any nigger going. We can't marry where we like, and we can't do as we like. People think because I'm the eldest son and she's the daughter of the Earl of Lackland that we can do just as we like. Bert, it's a mistake. We're tied hand and foot. We must marry money. Why? And he looked sadly at Bertie, who stared in astonishment. "Why? Because we haven't a single penny ourselves. We Lacklands are as poor as church mice. There isn't an inch of land, there isn't a brick or stone that isn't mortgaged, and we young ones, Ethel and I, must bring it all right again by marrying money. She'll have to mar-



**Drink
SEAL
BRAND
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ry some retired tea-dealer, and I—well, I know where I'd marry, and marry money, too; but I can't. The angel—for she is an angel, Bert—is too great, too grand, too good for me. You know, Bert, that there is no man under the sun I'd like to call brother more than I would you, but it can't be. Take a cigar and some liquor and give it up as a bad job, for it can't be. Ethel would never marry you without the earl's consent, and he never will give it."

"But," said Bertie, "he has given it."

"What?" said Fitz, with surprised astonishment.

"Given it and taken it away again. Read that," said Bertie, and he handed the earl's letter to Fitz.

Fitz read it, and his eyes opened their widest.

"But—but," he said, "do you mean to say that the earl gave his consent to your marrying Ethel—don't be offended, old fellow, I know you are worthy of her if any one is—without striking a bargain?"

"N—no," said Bertie, as the earl's words concerning the private fortune of Ethel recurred to his mind. "No," he informed me, very unnecessarily, that Ethel's fortune would be retained or forfeited."

"What!" exclaimed Fitz, springing up, with angry astonishment. "Do you mean to tell me that her money is gone? that she is robbed with the rest of us?"

"I tell you nothing but what I heard," said Bertie, calmly.

"It is gone," said Fitz, white with passion, "of course it is gone! Idiot that I was to think he would spare that when he has taken all else! He has spent—squandered the poor girl's fortune, and then sells her, bargains her away to the first comer. It is shameful. It is unendurable; and, by Heaven, I will not endure it!"

"The bargain is off," said Bertie.

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bitterly. "You forget that the earl has thought better of it. He has recalled his consent."

"Yes, because he has received a higher bid! I know him!" said Fitz, sternly. "He would sell her to the highest bidder as if she were a horse or a piece of furniture. When did this occur?"

"This morning," said Bertie, and then he placed Fitz in possession of such of the facts as he himself was cognizant of.

"I see it all," said Fitz, pulling at his yellow beard in a frenzy. "That Howard Murpoint has been at the bottom of it. But have you noticed how thick the earl and he have been lately? I begin to hate that fellow. Do you remember the old time down there at Penruddie, when he was a regular bore?"

"Shall I ever forget it?" said Bertie, softly.

"Oh, no! poor Leicester!" said Fitz. "Well, we said there was more in the captain, as he called himself then, than appeared at first sight; and now look at him! He's the heart and soul of the whole machinery of the Mildmays, his name is good on 'Change for any amount, and now—now he has taken an interest in us. Bert, there's mischief brewing, mark me if there isn't. Who is this Mr. Smythe you saw him with this morning?"

"A millionaire, one of his city friends, a nab and an idiot," said Bertie, calmly.

"Then that's the fellow Ethel will be sold to," said Fitz, with calm despair.

"No," said Bertie, rising, white and passionate. "I'd shoot him first."

"Shoot him and be hung?" said Fitz, groaning. "You can't prevent it. Howard Murpoint is cleverer than us all, and if he has set his heart upon Ethel's being sacrificed to this Smythe fellow, why, sacrificed she'll be."

"I will help it," said Bertie. "I do not believe Ethel will ever consent."

"She will," said Fitz. "I'll tell you why. They'll represent that if she marries the fellow, she'll save the family; and Ethel has such straight ideas of duty that she'll consent to sacrifice herself."

"Never!" said Bertie. "I would sooner see her in her grave. I would sooner tear her from them by force."

"I'll tell you what," said Fitz. "You had better get her away by cunning." Bertie thought for a moment.

"My honor—"

"Bide you do it," said Fitz. "She will sacrifice herself for a mistaken idea of duty. Nothing will save her unless—"

"He hesitated. Bertie's blood raced through his veins.

"Fitz," he said, "give me your consent, and I will do it. You know I love her. You have been more of a parent to her than her father. Save you consent, and I will snatch her from their clutches."

"I consent," said Fitz, "with all my heart, and I should think you less than the man you are if you didn't."

"I'm thinking of her," said Bertie, rising and walking to the window. "Will she ever forgive me?"

"Try her," said Fitz, rising and walking toward him. Try her. She loves you, Bert, I know, and—

"What's the matter?"

"Look here, quick!" exclaimed Bertie, who had started suddenly. "Look there—among the crowd now crossing the road! Isn't that the very figure and walk of poor Les? Heavens above! How like it sent every nerve of me thrilling, and he sank into a chair, staring out of the window still.

"I didn't see him," said Fitz. "Poor fellow! you were great friends. Was it anything like him in the face?"

"No—too old," said Bertie, with a sigh. "Poor Les! Poor Les!"

Then he fell to walking the room, and drank his soda and brandy like one parched with thirst.

That night Ethel was taken to Coombe Lodge, and Bertie, who had called at Grosvenor Square, was told that the family had left town.

Meanwhile Fitz remained, and the conversation he had with Bertie had nerved him to courage.

They say that one marriage makes nine, by example, and Fitz, seeing that Bertie had been brave enough to declare his love, determined to do so also.

That night there was another con-



**Buy Salt
That's Pure
Windsor
Table Salt**

versation at Lady Merival's, and Fitz new that the Mildmays would be guests.

He had an invitation, and he determined to go, though such things were not in his way, hoping to find an opportunity of declaring his long love for Violet.

The night was hot, and Fitz felt burning uneasiness and fear, for he feared Violet as much as he loved her.

He knew within his heart of hearts that she was too good for him, and yet he could not deny himself the pleasure or pain of putting the matter to the test.

Lady Merival's rooms were not too crowded. Her ladyship had mercifully asked no more than her rooms would hold, and Fitz, as he entered rather early in the evening, could see that the Mildmays party had not arrived.

"Just my luck," he murmured. "Of course, now I've plucked up courage, she won't come. Serve me right. I know she's far too precious for me."

He sauntered to a corner and sat down beside an Italian, who had a series of sketches to show and tried to get poor Fitz to speak to him.

But the Italian only knew "Yes" and "No" in English, and Fitz only knew "Macaroni" in Italian, so thus the conversation did not afford much amusement to either party.

Presently, as the rooms grew fuller, a tall gentleman with white hair and wearing spectacles approached the two, and, bowing to the Italian, asked permission to see the sketches.

He spoke in Spanish, a language as strange to Fitz as Italian, so after a few minutes, Fitz rose and left the Italian and Spaniard together.

The Spaniard looked up wistfully. "Do you know that gentleman?" he asked.

(To be continued.)

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War News
Messages Received Previous to 9
ZEPPELIN DESTROYED
LONDON, Feb. 19.—The Governor, Newfoundland, The French Government, ten hostile counter-attacks in Champagne, and enemy on a front of eight hundred French captured two hundred ers, making satisfactory profits other profits. The Russian Government, extremely desperate fighting, "tafi" parts on the right bank, Vistula. In Galicia the enemy were with severe loss. Further one ten hundred prisoners and machine guns were captured near sekow. A series of impetuous were repulsed with heavy loss battalion being almost entirely onetted and survivors captured. A Zeppelin has come down at the Danish island of Faeroe, officers and crew were interned.

ALLIES ARE READY
NEW YORK, Feb. 19.—British and French destroy meet all threatened steamship ing the flags of the Allies, and them into port, according to messages received by official steamship companies with this city. Receipt of these officials of the British and lines announced to-day, made confident that Germany's which went into effect today have little effect upon ship and from ports in England France.

THE DOCTOR'S WIFE
Agrets With Him About
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