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The Web;

OR,

TRUE LOVE'S PASSION.

CHAPTER XI

The Accident.

The moon was shining full upon his face, and she saw that he had gone deathly pale, and that he had caught his under lip in his teeth.

She stood for a moment, her face going from red to white, then the red fled, and the white alone remained.

"You are hurt," she breathed, and there seemed to be almost a sob in the simple words.

CHAPTER XII

The First Kiss of Love.

"YOU are hurt!" Only three words, but surely never were three simple words more eloquent.

Norah stopped as she spoke them, looked at Cyril, and there was consternation and tender reproach in her beautiful eyes, as well as in her voice. The glance and the words made his blood run riot in his veins, and his face was no longer pale.

"It is nothing," he said, trying to speak carelessly, and smiling.

"But it is something," she persisted, her brow wrinkled with anxiety and remorse. She had thought of the horses, the coachman, the footman, even a little of herself, and had bestowed no thought upon him who had come to the aid of all of them. "It is something! You winced when I— I touched you," and she stood still as if she declined to go on until she was satisfied.

"Well," he said, hesitatingly, "I think I must have strained my arm, or kicked it or something of the kind; but it isn't of the least consequence, I assure you, Lady Norah."

"You strained your arm?" she said, utterly refusing to accept his tone of levity and indifference. "When? When were you trying to drag the carriage out of the way?"

"I dare say," he assented, but avoiding her eyes, still fixed on him earnestly.

"No! I remember, you scarcely tried; it must have been before that? Why?—the blood rose to her face, then let it pale and remorseful, and she came closer to him—"was it you who stopped the horses?" She let her eyes run over him. "You are all dusty, and your coat is torn? Oh, how blind, how blind I have been! You did stop the horses, did you not, and you are badly hurt?" and in her sorrow and anxiety her hands went together almost piteously.

Cyril gave up trying to smile the question away.

"Well," he admitted, almost as if it were something to be ashamed of, "I was lucky enough to get hold of

them, and it was clumsy of me, but they got me down, and I suppose I just twisted my arm."

Norah shuddered. She had a keen imagination, and she saw it all; the terrified, plunging horses struggling in his grasp, and eventually forcing him under their hoofs. She saw it a great deal worse than it had really been, and a faint moan broke from her now pale lips.

"Oh, what shall I do?" she said, almost inaudibly.

He looked up at her as guiltily as if he had been discovered in the commission of a crime.

"I assure you that it is nothing," he began, but she interrupted him.

"Ah, I cannot trust you! You have made light of it, and I cannot believe that you are not hurt. Is there anything I can do?"

"Nothing, nothing, Lady Norah," he managed to interpose.

"And I was so selfish I thought of nothing but myself and the—the others," she said, penitently. "I might have known that you would have tried to stop them! Oh, I wish—I wish I had not let you come with me! Will you go home now?"

"That I certainly will not," responded Cyril, with a smile. "If you knew how glad—how proud I am to be with you—"

He stopped, conscious of the intensity in his voice, and that its intensity had brought the color to her face and caused her to lower her eyes.

"I mean," he stammered, "that I could not think of letting you go alone."

"And yet it is such a little way," she remonstrated.

"Yes, a very little way," he assented, with something like a sigh. In pain as he was, it was all too short for him.

"Could you not bathe it? Is it broken?" she asked.

"No, no," he said, with his short laugh. "That I am certain it is not. And there is no water here."

"If you will come," she said, "let us get to the Court as quickly as possible," and she set off.

"There is no need for hurry on my account," he said, pleadingly; "and do take my arm again."

"No," she said, firmly, "it is you who should take mine. I ought to help you, who need help more than I do. Shall I, can I, help you?"

He shook his head, smiling. "I could walk twenty miles," he said. "My arm is a little stiff, that is all."

"Let us hurry," she said. "You do not know what you have done to it—or will not tell me," she added, with a reproach that was ineffably sweet and serious. "And yet you would not let me rest until you had found out that I was not hurt."

"The cases are altogether different," he said. "If you had been hurt—"

He stopped. "Don't let us think of anything so horrible."

"What would it have mattered?"

she retorted, with self scorn; "I am only a useless girl, while you— Will you be able to paint?" she broke off to ask.

"As well—or as badly—as ever," he said, cheerfully. "It's the left arm."

She looked at it wistfully, and her look seemed to carry healing in it; the dull, dead pain seemed to cease.

"Upon my word, you make me feel mean," he said, with a laugh. "I don't believe there is anything the matter with me."

"I do not believe a word you say," she responded, with sad indignation.

"Well, then, don't let us say anything more about it," he remarked. "What a lovely night! I think the moon shines more brightly at Sandleigh than at any other place I have ever seen."

"I wish we were home," said Norah, disregarding his rhapsody. "And even then there will be no doctor!"

"That's something to be thankful for," he retorted, determined to dispel her anxiety if he could.

She was walking a few paces in front of him, and stopped suddenly before a small gate with a little cry of dismay.

"The gate's locked!" she said.

He went up to it and shook it.

"The keeper must have locked it," he said.

Norah looked round. She knew that the only other gate was at least a mile distant.

"Oh, what shall we do?" she exclaimed under her breath.

Cyril examined the hindrance; it was a chain secured by an ordinary padlock.

"Don't be alarmed," he said, with a smile; "from trespass to burglary is a very easy step. The other day I was on forbidden ground, now I am about to make forcible entry." He dislodged a big stone from the hedged bank and smashed the padlock.

Rather a rough kind of "Open Sesame!" he said.

Norah looked at him. It seemed to her that he was prepared for any kind of emergency, and, little thing though it was, it brought a subtle kind of admiration into her eyes.

"You think of everything," she said, softly. "I should have walked round."

"Well," he responded, "ladies are not supposed to break open padlocks; it's a man's privilege. I wonder whether the gamekeeper will shoot me, or only insist upon my getting six months?"

He held the gate open as he spoke for her to pass through, and in doing so, his hand chanced to touch hers. Her pity and tenderness had given him courage, and he took advantage, man like; his hand closed on hers, and he drew it within his arm.

"You see, my right arm is all right," he said, pleadingly.

Norah's lashes hid her eyes, but she allowed her hand to rest where he had placed it.

"What will you do when you reach home?" she asked, as if the silence that was falling upon them embarrassed her. "Will you send for a doctor?"

"No," he said. "Do you really wish to know, Lady Norah?"

She did not answer, and he went on after a pause: "I shall light a pipe and throw myself into my armchair, and think over all the incidents of this eventful night."

"Sadly eventful," she said, trying to speak in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Sadly? Not to me. If I had my way, if the gods had offered me my choice of a night, I should have chosen—"

He stopped in time, remembering that she was under his protection, that an accident had compelled her to be his companion at this unusual hour, and alone, and he could not take advantage of it to lay bare his heart. But the temptation—ah, the temptation was terrible!

"You would have chosen to break your arm?" said Norah, scarcely knowing what she said, but trying to speak banteringly and make light of his words.

"No, I should have chosen to be of some slight service to you," he answered in a low voice. "Do you know what it is that makes me happy?"

"No. Are you so happy?" she said, letting her eyes rest on his face for a moment.

"Very, completely happy," he answered. "It is just the reaction. When I saw you lying there so still,

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I thought—never mind what I thought; and now I have you walking by my side quite unhurt I feel like—like a man who has escaped the loss of a fortune, or come out well from an awkward scrape."

"Then it is all on my account," she said, "and there is no thought of yourself."

"It is all on your account," he assented. "Don't spoil my pleasure by speaking of myself. Ah, there is the house!"

He broke off with something like a sigh as the great place, shining in the moonlight, loomed before them.

Norah stopped. "And now will you go?" she said.

He stopped, with a distinct look of disappointment.

"Would you rather that I did not go with you to the house?" he asked.

Norah colored. "No," she replied, in a low voice. "I was thinking of yourself. I wanted you to get home. I would like you to come, that my father may know all you have done, and thank you as you deserve."

"Then I will come," he said. "But you have thanked me more than enough, Lady Norah!"

"I have not thanked you at all," she retorted. "What could I say?"

"Do you really wish to thank me?" he asked, in a low voice.

They had reached the steps, and he stood with one foot on the bottom one, looking at her with a light in his eyes which she seemed to feel under her lowered lids.

"If you do, don't say one word, but just give me the rose you wear."

His heart smote him the moment he had made the request, and he was prepared to see her draw herself up and reprove him with a look of maiden dignity.

But she stood and looked down at the flower which Lady Ferndale had picked for her and placed in her girle and he saw the color come and go in her lovely face.

(To be Continued.)

EVERYDAY ETIQUETTE. "A friend of mine recently attended a dance given at a private home. Is a party call necessary? If so, how soon after the entertainment?" asked Morris. "A call should be made on your hostess within two weeks after the date of the entertainment," answered his friend.

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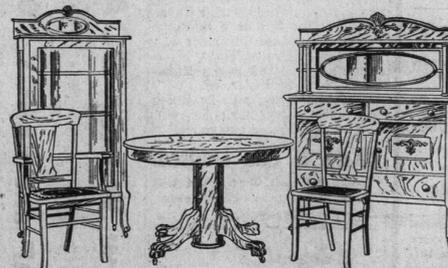
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Ferdinand's Fortune.

Ten years ago, M. Mancini, the well-known historian, paid a visit to Bulgaria. This talented man was skilled in palmistry, and King Ferdinand requested him to read his hand. Believe in palmistry or not, as you may, these are predictions which were put on record at the time. Mancini said: "I see deep mourning for your Highness, and then, five or six years later, a promotion and the realization

of a dream which you have hardly yet dared to believe.

"And then—" Mancini hesitated. "Tell me the truth," said the King. "Then, after this great success," said Mancini solemnly, "I read disaster for Bulgaria and for yourself."

The accuracy of Mancini's prophecy up to the present is startlingly correct. Soon after this visit Ferdinand's mother died. The promotion took place when Prince Ferdinand became Tsar of Bulgaria.

In 1912 Bulgaria beat the Turks. Then came the foolish war with her former allies, in which she lost territory, men, and prestige.

It remains to be seen in what form disaster will overtake Ferdinand himself.—Answers.

Macaroni and oysters baked and mixed as macaroni and cheese make a good winter dish.

Rice and meat cooked together in any one of many ways make an excellent luncheon dish.

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