



Happiness Secured AT A Heavy Cost!

CHAPTER XXXVII.
SAD NEWS—A DYING REQUEST.

Half an hour later Len is en route for Hanbury, and I am left to fear my suspense as best I can, a prey to a host of haunting fears and anxieties. A state of suspense that does not last long, however, though it seems like an age to me, for, a few hours later, the following message is wired to me from my brother:

"Come at once, Doctor Fuller is dying and wishes to see you."

"I must go!" I gasp, as Charley, who is present when the telegram arrives, takes the paper which has struck such a deathlike chill to my heart from my fingers, and stands looking down at me in grave perplexity. "I must go at once!"

"You shall go, dear; the wishes of the dying are sacred; but—I shall go with you," he replies; and as he speaks, he leaves the room to make preparations for our departure.

There is something in his look, just a shade, that ought to warn me to be careful of what I am saying. But I do not care. I am past caring for anything now. I can think of nothing, remember nothing, but this wild longing to look once more into the dear eyes so soon to close forever!

CHAPTER XXXVIII.
LESLEY'S SECRET.

A year has slipped past since the day on which that summons to poor Robert Fuller's deathbed was placed in my hands; and even now, in despite of all this lapse of time, my heart is pierced with a secret pang of remembrance, and my eyes grow dim with a mist of unshed tears, as I take up my pen to bring my story to a brief, but Heaven be thanked, not wholly sorrowful ending.

Once again, just for a few days, and in obedience to a whim of Leonard's, we are all together at the old house at Deepdene. Adelaide, who has been traveling in Switzerland during the past few months, has returned fully restored to health and strength, and

looking more bright and pretty, if possible, than the Adèle of old times. I think, as I glance down at her from the embrasure of the window at which I sit writing, and beneath which she is pacing the moss-grown paths of the weedy old garden, with her husband by her side. Her husband, indeed, now. The phantom barrier of a bigamous marriage that has held them apart so long is swept away forever.

Rita Chaptor has become Mrs. Leonard Kendrick, and she and her husband are, their friends declare, absurdly happy. A regular Darby and Joan, Len affirms, who, if they live to celebrate their golden wedding, mean to be just as ridiculously in love with each other as they are now.

They were married some months ago, and so were Charley and I; and we—I write it reverently, thankfully—are not one whit less happy than the others.

Heaven has been very good to me, for, at last, from the very depth and fullness of my heart, I can say, in all truth and sincerity, I love my husband.

The old love which, under other circumstances, might have shadowed my life into its close, is nothing more to me now than a tender memory of the past.

It was buried forever in the grave in which, a year ago, we laid poor Robert Fuller to his last, long sleep; and the saddest and most painful part of my task lies before me: To tell the story of his death as I learned it that day when I came down to Devon with Charley Denton, to look, as I thought, for the last time into the eyes of the man who had sent me his dying request that I would come to him.

To this day that hurried journey down to Deepdene seems to be more like a disturbing dream than anything else. The one distinct recollection I recall of it is the set, white look on poor Charley's face, as he watched me sitting cold and silent in my seat before him, too stunned, too utterly dazed by the dreadful horror that had taken possession of me, to speak, almost to think.

On and on went the train; the monotonous clank, clank of the wheels seeming to ring the words: "Doctor Fuller is dying and wishes to see you," through and through my brain with a torturing iteration that almost drove me mad.

At last the familiar little station at Hanbury was reached; a hand was laid on the train door, and a familiar figure stood before us.

It was Ernest Warden; but it did not strike me as in any way strange. I was past the possibility of wonder or surprise, and, with very much the feeling of a person who moves in a dream, I suffered him to transfer us to a waiting cab, and heard the driver's order: "To Deepdene."

"How is he?" I asked, forcing the words through my lips as Ernest, jumping into the cab, took a seat in front of me. "Are we in time?"

He turned, and looked at me in silence, and even before he spoke



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something in his face gave me the answer, "Too late!"

From that moment I needed no words to tell me that Robert Fuller was dead!

He had died that morning; but it was not until hours later that I could bear to ask or listen to the particulars. It was Ernest Warden, and not Len who told me; and there was an indescribable something in his voice and look as he performed the sorrowful task that touched me more deeply than the loudest expressions of sorrow and sympathy could have done.

"It seems more like the thrilling end of a sensational novel than the sober happening of everyday life, Lesley," he remarked, as, sinking into a chair by my side, he took my hand in just such a warm and brotherly clasp as Len might have taken it.

"But to explain matters fully, must begin at the beginning," he continued. "A few days ago, on glancing through the advertising columns of a daily paper, to my astonishment I alighted upon an advertisement that was evidently intended for me. It was carefully and ambiguously worded; but there was no possibility of mistaking the intelligence it conveyed.

"I read it over and over again, from the first word to the last, for, to my unspeakable joy, it hinted at what I have learned more fully since. That I was a free man—free to claim my darling—my wife!

"I was earnestly besought to communicate with the advertiser; and, on calling at the address named, what was my astonishment to find myself face to face with Doctor Fuller! But there is no need to go into any minute explanation, Lesley. A few words will suffice to explain the situation.

"The crazy inmate of Ivy Cottage and the woman with whom I contracted that mad marriage so long ago turns out to be poor Fuller's abandoned wife. She deserted him years before I met her in London, it seems; and until the day he beheld her in the moonlit garden at Deepdene, changed and aged by time and mental affliction, he was ignorant as to whether she was living or dead.

"From something you told him, he appears to have discovered her supposed relations with me, and the miserable shipwreck she was making of my happiness and Adelaide's, and from that hour he has been straining every nerve to lift the intolerable burden of that wretched lunatic's ownership from my shoulders to his own.

"Well, Lesley, we had a long talk in which everything was explained; and the upshot of it all was that he came down to Ivy Cottage with me for the purpose of resuming the responsibility of the woman, who, as it turned out, had never possessed the shadow of a right to my care.

"It was his intention to take her back to London with him and place her in an asylum; and, feeling like a man from whose soul some horrible incubus had been lifted, I went to the station to see them off. Maud was in one of her most sullen and impracticable moods that day; she had evidently recognized her husband, and seemed to shrink from him as with some dim perception of guilt and fear.

"Not but what she was quiet enough; but the demon of madness evidently possessed her; and, as we stood there on the platform, waiting for the train, something in her eyes

struck me with a vague, indefinable sense of foreboding.

"Would to Heaven some gift of foresight—some instinct of what was about to happen—had come to me in time; but it never does! These terrible calamities generally do overtake us when least prepared.

"Even now I hardly know how it all happened. We were standing together on the platform—Maud Fuller and I—when, just as the train came up, she made a sudden rush from our side, and, before any one could interfere to prevent it, threw herself on the line, straight under the wheels of the advancing train.

"It was a horrible moment, the thought of which will turn me sick and giddy to the day of my death. There was a cry of horror, a scream of terror from the bystanders, and the next moment, with a heroism worthy of a better cause, poor Fuller had sprung after her.

"In a moment it was all over. In its smooth, relentless way the iron monster came up to the platform, but two poor, human forms lay crushed beneath its pitiless wheels, and in a few minutes we knew the worst.

"He was too late to save the worthless life for which he had so needlessly imperiled his own. The wretched woman who had ruined his life was killed on the spot. They took her up, a shapeless, senseless mass, and laid her away out of sight as quickly as possible. He was not dead, though so badly hurt that he hardly knew, at first, poor fellow, whether it was a corpse or a living man that we carried into the little waiting room.

"A doctor was quickly in attendance, but he could do nothing—a fact of which no one was more fully conscious than the patient himself; and even in that supreme moment there was a grim humor in the smile with which he looked up into the despairing face of his collaborator.

"A hopeless case, doctor," he said, as we wiped the blood from the poor white lips. "Human skill is powerless enough here. Take me to Deepdene; I should like to die there."

"Ah, Lesley, he was a grand fellow!" Ernest pursued, a mist of tears in his eyes and a huskiness in his voice for which I honored him as I had never honored him before; "and as we watched over him through those last moments, Len and I felt that I would have given my right hand gladly, freely, to have saved him had it been possible; but it was not to be. That kind, good heart, to which sorrow has dealt so many a cruel stab in its time, is still and at peace forever."

"Tell me," I returned, as soon as I could command my voice sufficiently to speak, "did he suffer much? Was he conscious?"

"Quite, until the last; and I don't think he suffered so much as one might have expected," he replied. "He was beyond that, you know. I was sorry he did not live long enough to see you, Lesley," Ernest went on, little dreaming with what vital interest I hung on his words. "It was the one and only wish he expressed from first to last. 'If I don't last until she gets here, Warden, he said to me, when I told him that we had telegraphed for you, tell her how I longed to look on her fair, bright face once more, and that I should like her to have my ring, and keep it, if she will, in remembrance of a friend who loved her. Leave it where it is, old fellow,' he added, as I glanced at the golden hoop encircling a finger on the poor hand even then growing cold in death. 'If I do not live to give it to her, let her take it from my hand herself. Poor little Lesley, we never spoke of it, but some instinct told me that she gave me what, through many a lonely year my sorrowful heart had craved and yearned for: the sweet pity and sympathy of a tender woman's heart; and may Heaven bless her for it!"

(To be Continued.)

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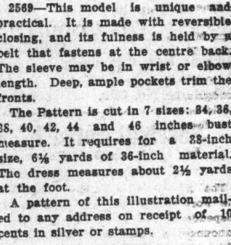
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WAR REVIEW.

The Germans have markedly strengthened their resistance against the Allied armies from the region of Arras to Rheims, but their effort to ward off future encroachments into the territory they are holding have failed. All along the front the German big guns are violently in action, and machine guns in vast numbers are being used in front of strategic points which the Allies are endeavoring to gain. Nevertheless the British have dug more deeply into the sector south-west of Cambrai, capturing important positions on the four miles front between the Havrincourt Wood and Pozières, regaining their trench positions dominating Gouzeaucourt and capturing Gouzeaucourt Wood. Meanwhile in the south the French are only a short distance west of St. Quentin and are at the gates of LaFere. On this last named sector the French are enlarging their turning movement against the great St. Germain forest, the conquest of which would remove the great barrier to an Allied advance in force eastward to the line of the Scheldt and the Meuse against both the Aisne and Chemin des Dames positions of the enemy. The Germans here and northeast of Soissons also are offering most determined resistance against the French, realizing that should General Mangin's strategy prove successful the entire German line eastward to Rheims necessarily would be compelled to undergo marked readjustment. Thousands of machine guns and guns of larger calibre are roaring away against the French both from the St. Germain forest and the Plateau above the Allette-Avre northeast of Soissons. Along the Aisne the German line still endeavours to retard the advance of the French in further crossings of the stream, probably in order to give their main army a chance to make its way unimpeded northward in case of a quick rush by the French towards Laon, a manoeuvre which seems in the making by Marshal Foch's forces. Large numbers of reinforcements have been rushed up here by the Germans and all along the Aisne front where the Americans are fighting alongside the French. Particular attention is being given by the Germans to the three bridges of their line in Flanders, northeast of Soissons, and around Helms. A break through at either point by the Allies, would spell disaster for the enemy. Therefore, the German high command is buttressing them for eventualities. In Flanders the German strategy seems to be the sheltering of points vulnerable to sharp assaults. Particularly is this noticeable along the Lys River south of Ypres, where the Germans are reported to have removed all their artillery to the east side of the river, and a little more to the north around Fyffes Chateau, where the British have advanced nearly a mile and apparently with slight opposition. The concentration of artillery of all calibres, including machine guns, and large bodies of men in the region of Soissons where every nook and corner of the rolling country contains hordes of defenders, proves the importance the enemy places in holding this territory, while nothing is being left unattended in the region around Rheims to strengthen in gun and man power the German line against the assaults the Germans apparently realize are soon to come. After virtually two months of hard fighting in which from Arras

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