



Ruled Destiny!

CHAPTER IX.
IN THE GLOW OF LOVE.

"Oh, hush!" she said, trembling, a great wave of tenderness and pity sweeping over her heart for the handsome, true-hearted boy. "Don't say any more, Lord Clifford. You—you—mistake! It is I who would be unworthy of you."

"Floriss!" reproachfully, passionately.

"Yes, yes! Who am I that you should so humble yourself? Oh, do not say any more! I am sorry—very, very sorry!"

"Then—then—" he faltered, looking down at her.

"Indeed I am very sorry!" she repeated; "but I did not know, indeed I did not!"

"No, or you would have treated me coldly and kept me away!" he said, sorrowfully.

Then with a wild hope that was almost despair, he took her hand in his own and pressed it fiercely.

"Floriss, is it, must it be 'No'? Will you not give me some little hope? I will be patient! I will not plague you! You shall see how patient I can be!"

"Oh, hush! hush!" she said. "Do not say another word, Lord Clifford. It must be 'No'! I—I cannot love you. I am very, very grateful for the honor you have done me, and I know how great an honor it is! I wish—yes, I will say it—I wish that I could have answered differently, but I cannot."

She let her hand rest in his while she spoke, then she drew it gently away.

He let it go, slowly, reluctantly, and his lips parted with a long sigh, as if something had gone from his life; then with a brave effort he forced a smile.

"You have been very good to me, Miss Carlisle," he said, and his voice rang with the pain that tortured him. "You have been more patient than I deserve. I will say 'Good-by,' now."

"There shall be no word of 'goodness' or 'patience' between us, Lord Clifford," she said, "and if I cannot—if I cannot be to you all that you wish, at least we can be friends still."

Poor Bertie smiled sadly and shook his head.

"How little you understand!" he murmured. "I know what you think, Miss Carlisle. You have heard, you know, that I do not bear the highest

character for wisdom, and you think that because my past has been frivolous and foolish, that I shall get over this and forget it. Ah, you do not understand how deeply I love you! All my life will be changed from this hour."

"Oh, Lord Clifford!"

"Yes, Floriss; I shall not get over this so easily; I shall not try to forget it. If I cannot have your love, I can at least endeavor to be less unworthy of it. You ask me to remain your friend! Floriss, all my life I shall think tenderly of you, and of myself as your lover. Do you think I could bear to see you day after day, knowing that there can be no hope for me; that I could endure to meet you as an ordinary friend when all the time my heart was burning in the desire to make you my wife! Not! I must go away. Good-by. Some day—who knows—I may be able to meet you without the pang of misery and disappointment which I feel now. Good-by."

His voice, the boyish voice which only this morning had rang out merrily, the musical voice which to Floriss ears had always something of laughter in it, was very grave and sad, and his eyes resting on her face were full of a great despair.

She put out her hand in silence, feeling that any word from her would be worse than useless.

He took her hand, held it for a moment, then raised it toward his lips.

"May I?" he asked, simply, too noble and chivalrous to snatch a kiss by stealth.

She did not speak, but her eyes, in which the tears were standing, answered for her.

Poor Bertie kissed her hand twice, then turned and hurried away.

Floriss sat under the stately palms sad and troubled.

No girl who is worth anything refuses an offer from an honorable man without being sad and sorrowful, especially if she really likes the man, and only just stops short of loving him, and Floriss really did like Bertie.

His merry, boyish laugh, his frank brotherly way had been very pleasant to her; she only just discovered how pleasant now that she had lost them—perhaps forever.

Another girl might also have remembered and regretted that she had refused a viscount—but Floriss gave no thought to Bertie's rank.

It was of himself she thought, as she sat with downcast face, and hands listlessly in her lap.

Why had she sent him away? Why had she not tried to love him? At any rate, why had she not asked for time? She asked herself these questions, and did not dare to answer them.

There are times when we shrink from examining our own hearts, lest we should discover the truth, and Floriss shrank from examining hers, lest she should find an answer there which would fill her with shame and confusion.

With a sigh she rose, then suddenly remembering that she was alone, and that she could not very well enter the ballroom unattended, she resumed her seat, quite contented to remain in the quiet and cool for a time.

Presently the band, which had been playing a square dance, ceased, and the couples began to find their way into the conservatory.

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Unwilling to be discovered, Floriss rose and retreated still further into the dim region of palms and ferns, and found another seat still more secluded than the last. It was so far removed from the ballroom, that but for the sound of voices, and reflection of the lights on the fountains, she might have fancied herself in the recesses of some tropical forest.

While she was sitting there, a gardener passed by, and half startled by the apparition of a beautiful lady in a white dress, touched his hat respectfully and apologetically, and turned off through a door partly concealed by creeping plants.

Floriss was just thinking that if she chose she might remain undiscovered till the ball broke up, when she heard the rustle of a woman's dress, and a man's voice close behind her.

At the sound of the voice Floriss started. Although it had only uttered one word, she recognized it.

It was Lord Norman! She looked around anxiously, and saw, through the fern leaves, Lord Norman and Lady Blanche sauntering down the narrow path.

Lady Blanche was magnificently dressed in an Indian silk of the thinnest fiber, and of the palest pink. It was studded with pearls in the oriental fashion, and fitted her to perfection. Nestling in her golden hair were flowers of diamonds, that sparkled and gleamed like fire-flies in the still light.

The beautiful face, usually so cold and impassive, wore a faint, soft smile, that played about the perfect lips and shone in the velvety eyes.

As they approached, Floriss saw that she had clasped Lord Norman's arm, and that her face was turned up to his with a happy, childlike smile.

Then Floriss looked at him. Surely there would be an answering smile on his face? No man could resist the entreaty in those dark, velvety eyes! But there was no responsive happiness on his face; grave, almost grim, it seemed by contrast with hers, and Floriss saw that, though he was presumably listening to her, his attention was straying, and that he was thinking of something else than the beautiful woman clinging so lovingly, so appealingly, to his arm.

"I am so glad you have come, Bruce!" Floriss heard her murmur. "You said you did not intend to, and I was looking forward to a blank evening."

"I changed my mind," he said, if not coldly, carelessly.

"That is a woman's privilege, and one they do not extend to men, Bruce," she retorted, with a smile that seemed significant to Floriss.

"Oh, men have all your weaknesses as well as their own, Blanche," he said.

Floriss looked around for some means of escape.

To be found by them, playing, as it would seem, at eavesdropping! The idea was terrible! But there was no exit save by a narrow path in which they stood, and hoping that they would turn back, Floriss drew still closer into her leafy shelter and tried not to listen.

"Forgive me, Blanche. But Hawkinsley! Why, great heavens, he is as old as Methusalem! Why, he was an old man when I was a boy! He must be eighty—more!"

"And you laugh!" murmured Lady Blanche between her closed lips.

"I beg your pardon! But could you help it? Hawkinsley! Why, he has more than one leg in the grave, and is as false as one of the models at Madam Tussaud's! His wig and teeth and enameled complexion used to be the joke when I first came to town! And he proposed to you! Of course you gave him a speedy answer, Blanche?"

She opened her fan and looked at it.

"No, Bruce. I—Lord Hawkinsley is an old friend of my father's."

"He might have been of your grandfather's," retorted Lord Norman.

"And—"

(To be continued.)

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WAR SUMMARY.

Not alone are the Italians, British and French comrades-in-arms holding the greater part of a 100-mile front from the region southeast of Treviso to the Adriatic, but they themselves have turned aggressors on some of the more important sectors in the mountain regions. Counter attacks of the hilly country on the north at several points have resulted in the occupation by the Allies of ground south of them in the initial onslaught, while a stiffening of the front at the Piave River has rendered impossible for the time being, at least, their fording of the stream by the enemy. Hard fighting still is in progress with the Austrians, who are bringing the strongest kind of pressure to bear against the Allied armies on the north and east parts of the front, an endeavor to reach the lines of gain across the Zonon loop, the strokes of the enemy are violent in the Montello Plateau, the highest of ground along the middle reaches of the Piave, the capture of which would give him command of the roads leading through Treviso to Venice and fairway west through to the province of Treviso. The Italians are inflicting heavy casualties on the troops of Emperor Charles which crossed the river at this point. South from the Andrea to Mossalata, the northern and southern flanks of the famous Zonon loop, where last year the Austrians effected a crossing of the Piave, only later to be driven back with sanguinary losses, and from Poshalata to San Donn Di Piave, the fighting is of a violent character, with the Italians holding the line. Between Candiano and Zonon loop, where the Austrians crossed the Piave on Saturday, the Italians have driven them back to the river bank and are endeavoring to push them across the stream. This far the Italians, British and French troops have made prisoners of more than 4,000 Austrians, while the Austrian war office asserts that 12,000 prisoners have been taken by the Austrians. Although fighting has died down considerably in the mountain region, it is expected soon again to be resumed with increased violence. Emperor Charles is reported to be at the front with his army, and thousands of reinforcements for the armies are said to be moving southward. The Allied Commanders are anticipating violent fighting, believing, owing to the tactical and political aspect in the dual monarchy, that the Austrians must make a good showing in order to temper the feeling against the war at home. There still has been no return to the heavy fighting of last week on the fronts in France. Several engagements of greater import that the usual raiding operations have taken place. Counter attacks against the French in newly-won positions between the Oise and the Aisne were delivered by the enemy on Monday, but were repulsed. The French captured 370 men and 25 machine guns in the fighting northeast of Chateau Thierry. In the Belleau Wood the Germans are treating the Americans to large waves of gas and shells, but their efforts have gone unrewarded so far as breaking the line is concerned. American patrols to the left of Chateau Thierry again have crossed the Marne, attacked the German and returned to their base.

THE KAISER'S BOAST.

AMSTERDAM, June 17.

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