

# Love & Conqueror

OR

## WEDDED AT LAST

### CHAPTER XX.

"It is impossible!" Captain Fairholme cried, breaking in passionately. "Even the abominable law in force in this country cannot make that a marriage!"

"Less even is needed to make a marriage in Scotland," said Sir Hugh with a slight smile. "It behoves one to be careful in this country, Captain Fairholme. Sir Gilbert will tell you so, I think; and indeed, if Shirley and myself had done innocently what we did willingly, we should have been equally married, and we should have had to make the best of it."

"Uncle Gilbert"—Shirley's voice faint, gasping, tremulous broke in here—"is that true?"

"It is true," Sir Gilbert said, with grave sadness; and a moan like the moan of a man in physical pain broke from Guy Stuart.

Shirley looked at him pitifully; she had known what the answer would be; she knew that less had made her mother the wife of a man whom she had not meant to marry. She felt that all was lost; and yet the miser on Guy's face rendered her desperate. That she should have so wounded him, she who loved him so madly, who would have died for him, who would willingly have crept to his feet and prayed for forgiveness as if she had brought this anguish to him fully! For his sake she fought against the certainty which seemed to have frozen her blood against the certainty which seemed to have frozen her blood as she knelt there, in silent and powerless, able only to suffer.

"Uncle Gilbert," she said, in a voice so broken with passionate agitation and bitter pain that it was difficult to understand what she said, "are you sure? Is there no room for doubt? I know—I know my mother's story; but—another judgment. Oh, it is impossible," she cried, rising to her feet with a sudden despairing strength—"it is impossible that a few jesting words can have made me that man's wife? Uncle Gilbert, if you have any pity, tell me that at this is some horrible dream."

She stood swaying to and fro, as she pushed back the hair from her forehead and ruthlessly swept aside the costly lace. Sir Gilbert could not look at her; she was so like her mother, as she stood there, suffering as her mother had suffered, cursed as her mother had been cursed. Ah, if that mother had lived but one short hour more, how differently her child's life would have been ordered, how

## EXPERIENCE OF MOTHERHOOD

### Advice to Expectant Mothers

The experience of Motherhood is a trying one to most women and marks distinctly an epoch in their lives. Not one woman in a hundred is prepared or understands how to properly care for herself. Of course, nearly every woman nowadays has medical treatment at such times, but many approach the experience with an organism unfitted for the trial of strength, and when it is over her system has received a shock from which it is hard to recover. Following right upon this comes the nervous strain of caring for the child, and a distinct change in the mother results.

There is nothing more charming than a happy and healthy mother of children, and indeed child-birth under the right conditions need be no hazard to health or beauty. The unexplainable thing is that, with all the evidence of shattered nerves and broken health resulting from an unprepared condition, and with ample time in which to prepare, women will persist in going blindly to the trial,

Every woman at this time should rely upon Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, a most valuable tonic and invigorator of the female organism.

In many homes once childless there are now children because of the fact that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound makes women normal, healthy and strong.

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Yours sincerely,  
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such anguish she would have been spared!

"Guy," she said, passionately, a tear in his eye, "he might listen to you. He was your friend."

"My friend! Yes," Guy muttered bitterly; "and therefore his treachery ten times greater, the villain!"

"Stuart—for Shirley's sake!" interposed Oswald Fairholme hastily; "Glyn, can nothing be done? Will you not give up this claim?"

"Captain Fairholme, if I wished to back out of the marriage, I could not do so," said Sir Hugh, somewhat impatiently. "Who can tell what may occur in the future to induce you to stand up for the marriage which now she repudiates? We cannot see into the future; nor can we tell what circumstances may arise to render it advisable in your cousin's eyes that she should claim the title and position which undoubtedly belong to her as my wife."

"His wife!" Shirley echoed, with an expression of unutterable scorn and hatred in her beautiful eyes. "His wife!"

As she uttered the words, she realized for the first time what her position was. Loving one man with all her heart and soul and strength—even as Marian Fairholme twenty years ago before had loved Rowland Ross—she was bound for life to another. All the anguish that the mother has borne the child must bear, all the pain of knowing that her present position was her own fault; that she had brought sorrow and despair to darken forever the life for which she would, oh, so gladly have given her own! The story Latrelle had told his master six weeks before had been nobly acted upon.

The laws of the land in which they lived had made her the wedded wife of the man who stood watching her with eager blue eyes, in which was some tenderness perhaps, but more triumph. She was married to a man whom not only she did not love or respect, but whom she scorned and condemned and hated for his base

treachery, his despicable lies. She was his for all her life, and nothing could keep her from him, no power, no love, no devotion. As the full knowledge of all she had lost broke upon her bewildered senses, her strength gave way. Without a word, without a movement to save herself, she dropped at Ruby's feet, a mass of costly satin and lace and diamonds, and her colorless face was like the face of a dead woman.

### CHAPTER XXII.

"Alice, I can't understand you; you are so unlike yourself."

"On the contrary," Miss Fairholme said haughtily, "it is you, Ruby, who seem to have lost all correct judgment and all sense of what is right and wrong."

"I would rather lose all correct judgment than be utterly devoid of compassion and pity, or even common humanity," returned Ruby doggedly.

"I have plenty of compassion and pity for objects that deserve it," said Miss Fairholme scornfully—"not for a girl who by the meanest falsehoods and most despicable behaviour has obtained her end and has made herself the wife of one of the wealthiest men in Scotland."

"A girl who by the meanest falsehoods and the most despicable and basest treachery has been trapped into breaking her own heart and the heart of the man whom she loves," retorted Ruby, with an angry sob.

"Ah—so she says!" said Alice sentimentally.

"Alice, this is too bad!" cried Ruby passionately through the hot angry ears which rose in her eyes as she looked at Alice's pretty contemptuous face as, in the prettiest of invalid rappers, she lay on a couch in the parlour.

It was in the afternoon of the day following Shirley's wedding day. Already the first terrible excitement was over, and the household had resumed its ordinary routine. The pretty bridal robes had been folded away, Sir Jasper Stuart's regal wedding-gift had been once more replaced upon its satin bed, the decorations had been taken from the walls, the wedding-favors put aside. Only Sir Gilbert's gloomy brow and Lady Fairholme's preoccupied countenance showed that something had gone wrong; and in the servants' hall the women and maids talked with bated breath of the anguish on Guy Stuart's haggard face and of Miss Alice's hysterics—but Miss Ross they did not see.

Sir Hugh Glyn had proved himself perfectly reasonable, and even considerate. He acquiesced cordially in Captain Fairholme's suggestion that the same day should be obtained; and he same day Oswald and Guy had one to Edinburgh, where they thought it could best be obtained. Sir Hugh had gone back to Maxwell, declining Sir Gilbert's invitation to remain at the Court. His presence here would be an intrusion, he said, in the present circumstances; he could await Major Stuart's return at his own house.

Alice, whose vanity had received a terrible blow—for she had considered Sir Hugh a captive to her bow and arrow, and was greatly mortified at having lost all chance of such a brilliant part—had chosen to take what he called her cousin's "infamous behaviour" so deeply to heart that she was suffering from a nervous attack which required a great deal of attention, but which did not interfere with her flirtation with her brother's friends, both of whom, at Lady Fairholme's request, remained at the court while Shirley had not left her room, whither she had been carried a long death-like swoon, which had followed the terrible strain she had endured for so long; and the only persons who had seen her were Ruby, and Delphine, Alice's maid whose romantic heart was touched by

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the girl's terrible position, and who, moreover, had all a Frenchwoman's love of intrigue; while Ruby, in her earnest sympathy, had cried till her pretty dark eyes became red and stiff.

On recovery from her long fainting fit, Shirley had behaved very quietly; she was almost too exhausted for anything else. She felt but little, and she feared but little, for all power of thought seemed gone. She pressed Ruby's hand with a faint little grateful pressure when she found her head lying on Miss Copel's shoulder and the pretty piquant face, with a tender pity unusual to it, bending over her; then she closed her eyes wearily again, and let herself drift away into a half stupor which lasted until evening.

Ruby did not leave her all that night. Under her quick impulsive exterior the little heiress had a very loving heart, and all her pity and tenderness were aroused for Shirley. It did not matter to her that almost everyone at Fairholme Court condemned Shirley; she felt in her inmost heart that the girl was true; and she laid the aching head on her bosom, and pressed her lips to the burning brow with a tenderness which was an inexpressible comfort to Shirley in her desolation.

Toward evening, when Shirley roused up and found Ruby still watching by her pillow, her natural unselfishness asserted itself. She insisted on making Ruby rest on the couch; and, to please her, the girl acquiesced, while Shirley sat beside her, holding her hand in her little hot fingers, and speaking now and then a few words of thankful gratitude for Ruby's tenderness and consideration.

Presently Delphine brought in a tray, and Shirley made a feint of eating to induce Ruby to have some dinner; and, when the evening wore on into night, the two girls went to rest, and Ruby cried herself to sleep in Shirley's arms. But no sleep came to the other girl's wide-aching eyes. It seemed to Shirley that she would never sleep again.

(To be Continued.)

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