

THE WINSTALLS A TALE OF LOVE AND MONEY

OF
NEW YORK

BY
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CHAPTER XXI.

THE THOUSAND ISLANDS.

About a week after Mr. Symington had signified his intention of going to Berlin Mr. Winstall intimated to his daughters that he might have to take a trip to Toronto. There was an investment, he said, that he thought of making in that city, and he might need to go and investigate the matter personally. He was not in the habit of consulting his daughters about his investments. What could they know about investments? So he did not consult them in this case. Nor could he say anything definite until he would investigate.

It was at the breakfast table that Mr. Winstall spoke of this investment. If his way was not quite clear, something happened the same evening that made him more decided. This was a visit from Mr. Stuart. He came after dinner. After a short chat with the family he found an opportunity of intimating to Mr. Winstall privately that he wished to speak with him in the library. The gentlemen excused themselves, and withdrew.

"I am a blunt man," said Mr. Stuart, as soon as they were seated, "and I don't know how to go about a delicate matter in a delicate way. And I am afraid that what I have to say may give you mortal offence."

"Why, what's the matter?" said Mr. Winstall. "I suppose I have done or said something not quite orthodox, and you have come to give me a lecture. Well, go ahead; I know your intentions are good."

"Oh, I doubt if you will think my intentions are good at all," said Mr. Winstall, "when I tell you what they are. I want you to do me the greatest favor one man can do another. I want you to give me your daughter."

"My daughter!" said Mr. Winstall. "Which of them? and what do you want with her? I don't understand you." No; smart man as he was, it had never dawned upon him that there was anything, or could be anything, between Mr. Stuart and one of his children.

"Well, to be plain," said Mr. Stuart, "Lucinda is the one I want, and I want her to be my wife, if she will have me."

That was plain enough, surely; yet it took Mr. Winstall a minute or so to quite take it in.

"I never surmised such a thing," he said at length. "And it comes to me as a painful surprise. Is it so that my little girls are becoming women, and that somebody may want to take them from me? I don't like it at all, I can tell you."

There was a silence—a painful, constrained silence. Then Mr. Winstall resumed. "If Lucinda must leave me," he said, "there is no man I would like her to go to so well as myself. Have you spoken to Lucinda?"

"Oh, not at all," said Mr. Stuart. "My first duty lay with you. Your daughter may not accept me. My hope is that she may, for since I buried my wife I have seen no woman I wished to put in her place but one."

"Well if you can arrange it between you," said Mr. Winstall "you have my blessing,

however worthless it be." And he shook Mr. Stuart's hand warmly.

Later the same evening Mr. Stuart had an interview with the young lady whose destiny was being thus discussed all unknown to her. Not knowing exactly what passed at that interview we can only surmise that it was agreeable, judging from the brisk and elastic step of Mr. Stuart as he left the Winstall mansion.

Mr. Winstall having been made aware of the lady's favorable, or at least hopeful, reception of the suit, retired to the library, and soliloquised something after this fashion.

"Well, this is a surprise. I would not have dreamed it. And Stuart is certainly the best fellow she could get. She might have got a wealthy man, probably, if she had waited. But he might be a duffer or a rake. Lucinda had made a wise choice. She is a good girl, and chooses right things anyway. Well, this will smooth my own way, will it not? If Ethel comes here she will have a clear course. But that would be all right anyhow. They would be sure to agree. But then, if Lucinda goes, and Ethel does not come—I would be in a bad fix then, wouldn't I? Well, I must look sharp. Ethel shall come if I can bring her. I will start to-morrow afternoon."

This was an unusually vigorous line of action for Mr. Winstall to pursue. But he put his design into force. At breakfast next morning he said he would leave for Toronto by the afternoon train. Then he touched lightly and delicately on Lucinda's affair, leaving on her heart the very clear impression that he would be sorry to lose her, but that if she must leave him she could not have chosen better.

Miss Pearce's stay in Toronto was within three days of expiring when Mr. Winstall arrived. He judged it better not to declare himself at once, but to be on hand as much as possible, paying Miss Pearce what tender and gallant attention he could, so as to prepare her to give him a favorable answer. As she had not fixed her route to Montreal he recommended her to take the picturesque river route and to allow him to accompany her. He carried both points, which gave him a happy augury of success.

It was a beautiful and balmy moonlight night when Miss Pearce and her lover sailed through the Thousand Islands. If the soft scenery of nature has anything to do in softening our hearts, Miss Pearce ought to be very impressionable in that inimitable scenery. It was there that Mr. Winstall divulged his feelings and his hopes, asking her to share his lot, and pledging himself to life long devotion. Miss Pearce did not say him nay; but her first impulse was to laugh.

"To think," she said, "of asking me to be Lucinda's step-mother. It would be too ridiculous. She may be technically five years younger than I am, but she is really twenty years older in wisdom, and steadiness, and real character. Could you not manage to make her the step-mother?"

Then Mr. Winstall told of Lucinda's intended marriage, which would give ample room for the new comer. That hint hurt Miss Pearce a little. She said she was glad she had half consented before she knew of

this. "For," said she, "I would like her to be with me always. But I am glad, for after you, she is getting the best man in the world."

The final arrangement was that the matter would remain open until Miss Pearce could see her father and mother. If she left them they would be alone. Her first duty lay at home, and she would count it no sacrifice to stay with them if duty pointed that way. Mr. Winstall urged haste. But Miss Pearce had arranged to stay a month in Montreal, and she would not curtail her visit. But she would write all particulars home.

On arriving in Montreal Mr. Winstall wrote to Lucinda that the investment had shifted to Montreal, and that he had to follow it, but that it was in a fair way of turning out all right. He lingered two days in the city, and then took his departure.

On his journey home he was moved to a spirit of more devout thankfulness than perhaps he had ever known. Had not a kind Providence loaded him with blessings? Had not his sorrow been turned into joy? And what return was he making for all his mercies? Ought he not to live a worthier and more useful life? Ah, when Ethel would come, she would teach him how. Something of this spirit breathed through the letters he wrote her during her stay in Montreal, and that gave her a new joy. He wrote her father and mother also, earnestly pleading with them to surrender to him this most precious gift.

In the meantime Miss Winstall kept the even tenor of her way. When her father apprised her of what he intended and hoped for in regard to Miss Pearce, she was not entirely surprised, but was profoundly thankful. Miss Pearce would not be lost to her, and her father would have one more worthy than herself to direct the affairs of the household. When once she spoke of family prayer, and delicately hinted that someone would surely continue the duty, to her great joy he proposed to take it himself on Sabbath mornings. And so it was arranged. It may seem a simple matter, but with the taking of this new duty there came to him a more tender and devotional spirit. The Sabbath became a more hallowed day. A new aroma of peace infused itself through the home, like a breath of perfume from some far off land of flowers.

Continued.

Finding Fault.

The winds refused to blow;
"No use," said they, "to try
From north or south, or east or west,
These folks to satisfy.
The north wind is 'too cold'!
The west wind 'bold and rough'!
The east is 'chilly,' they complain;
The south, 'not cool enough'!"

And so the windmills stopped.
And ships lay idly by,
The sun beat down from morn till night
Because no clouds could fly.
The people sighed for wind.
"Blow hot or cold," said they,
From north or south, or east or west,
'Twill be the wisest way!"
—Youth's Companion.

A girl cannot too sedulously guard her mother, nor too gently bear with her, if the mother have reached a period where she is more easily wearied than formerly, and where little things vex her. To some of us there come days when our hearts are heavy because we were not so sweet and loving as we might have been, and God alone can help us when this realization comes too late.—Margaret E. Sangster in Ladies' Home Journal.