

The Lost Will; OR, LOVE TRIUMPHS AT LAST!

CHAPTER VII.

When Jack and the butler were left alone they went through a form of trying to restore the life which had departed, though they knew their efforts were hopeless. Presently they heard the panting of a motor-car; the doctor came in. After scarcely more than a momentary examination he shook his head.

"Let us take him upstairs," he said.

"But, good heavens, Wetherby!" groaned Jack. "It can't be possible! I tell you he was all right a little while ago, when I saw him after dinner—"

"He has not been right for years, Chalfont," said the doctor, gravely. "Heart! I warned him. I advised him to cut work and take it easy; but, poor fellow! he was one of those men who won't take advice, especially from a doctor. No, no; no need for you—we can manage him," he added, compassionately.

For Jack was shaking like a leaf; but, notwithstanding his emotion, he insisted upon bearing a hand, and they carried Chalfont to his room, where Jack remained for some time, kneeling beside the bed, his hand gripping the cold one of the man who had been so good to him. At last Wetherby persuaded him to leave the room; they went downstairs to the den, as if by an inspection of it they could bring themselves to realise that its owner was indeed dead.

"What was it?" inquired Jack, dropping into a chair and clasping his head in his hands. "As I told you, he was quite well, just as usual. He was talking to me as calmly, cheerfully—"

He stopped for a moment as he recalled Chalfont's words. "Yes—he did say something about his heart the other evening; but he made light of it. Why should he die to-night, when he was quiet and resting? For the work he was doing wouldn't worry him. If there had been a sudden knock—"

He stopped again, remembering, in a vague fashion, the incident of the old man and his daughter. Had the man been up to the house, seen Mr. Chalfont? Had there been any scene? He was too confused, bewildered, overwhelmed, to pursue the mental inquiry. He heard the doctor go to the telephone and call up Mr. Horton, the lawyer Chalfont employed for his private and confidential legal work; he heard Wetherby say, in grave and hushed tones:

"I know, I know," responded Jack, struggling with his tears, and the lump which rose in his throat and seemed to choke him. "Oh, yes, he has had a good time; but he deserved it, at hand, to help him; perhaps I might have given him something to stave it off, to pull him round. It was a fine night—I thought he was engaged with his work—I went for a stroll—"

"My dear fellow, you've nothing to reproach yourself with," said Wetherby. "It might have happened any time when you were not with him. Come, come, don't harass yourself with such thoughts! I know you were fond of him—"

"Fond of him!" echoed Jack. "I should think so. I've reason to be. He treated me like a son, though I had no claim on him; none whatever. I've lost the best friend a man ever had—"

His emotion threatened to overwhelm him; he got out his pipe and, with a trembling hand, filled it and lit it. "That's better," said Wetherby. "Pull yourself together, Chalfont; everything lies on your shoulders now. He had no kith or kin, I believe," he added, significantly.

"No," assented Jack, with difficulty. "He had only me."

"Well, there's one thing, his affairs are sure to be in good order," mused Wetherby, for the sake of talking; "he was a splendid business man, and Horton will have everything straight. Now, what do you say to going to bed and trying to get a little rest? I shall stay here for the night—don't you trouble, I'll make arrangements—you go to bed."

Jack shook his head. He paced his own room for the rest of the night; and he had scarcely changed and had his bath in the morning when Horton arrived in his motor. He was a fine type of the legal profession—tall, thin and spare, prematurely bald, with the clear-cut features, the calm but searching eyes of the lawyer. He was a man of scrupulous honour and integrity, and he had fully appreciated the acute brain and unwavering purpose of the self-made man which had enabled him to amass his vast wealth.



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