

LITTLE WON.

CHAPTER XV. LOST!

"I wonder if I am behaving quite decorously," said Nessa, suddenly seized with a misgiving. I don't think I am, somehow, by the way people look at me. "You must not think ill of me if I'm not so nice as your sister; for, you see, I have only left school about two months, and I have certainly never dined with anybody but a lady before."

"How do you know my sister is nice?" Eric asked.

She could not tell him that she figured his sister with his simple, honest face and delicate kindness; but her eyes betrayed the thought, as she answered with some embarrassment—

"Oh, I know she is sweet and amiable. You told me something about her, and I have guessed the rest. Tell me more—about her, and your father, and your home."

Eric told of them, and their quiet lives and wholesome surroundings, with loving warmth and unpretentious pride; and Nessa, listening, caught something of his glowing enthusiasm.

"Yes, I see it all," she said; "that quiet life—sweet and tender and pure, like an evening song."

Then she rested her cheek on her hand with a sigh, and sat silent, with sadness in her young face.

Despite her ignorance of the world, and her confiding innocence, her mind was not at ease as she thought of Mrs. Redmond and the course they were taking. She could not see in what way she was to blame, and yet she was oppressed with a feeling of responsibility, which had never before troubled her spirit with a serious reflection. Looking onward, it seemed to her that the past was already overcast with the shadow of wrong doing.

Eric looked at his watch.

"What time is it?" she asked.

"It is past three."

"And no telegram has come yet! Do you think there can be any mistake?"

"Mrs. Redmond may have forgotten that I said you were going to the riding school."

"You said that a true friend cannot forget."

"Perhaps Mrs. Redmond is not a true friend."

"If no message should come for me, what shall I do?" she asked in dismay.

"Tell me," he said, eagerly, "that then you will accept my father's offer, and make a friend of my sister in the place of the one who forgets you."

"It is too soon to say she forgets me."

"Yes; we will not be unjust. The train does not leave Liverpool Street until eight o'clock. I promised my father to meet him there. We will wait till the last moment for a telegram. Your friend will know that you cannot wait at the riding school after a certain hour. Do not think you will be under obligation to us. My father is a man of business. He will consult the best lawyers, and see that you get your inheritance, and you will pay him in money for all you have received, and be quite independent. No one will have any claim on you—not any one," he said, impressively, and then, to make his meaning clear, he continued, dropping his voice, and speaking with some difficulty, "I must say something more, that you may have no cause to hesitate about going with my father and sister. I shall stay in London, and you will not see me for three years."

Had Nessa been a shallow girl or a worldly girl, she would have replied with a more or less graceful compliment, and have got out of an embarrassing position cheaply; but she felt deeply, and was too sincere, too simple, for that. She sat silent, looking in his face with wondering eyes, while the warm blood mantled in her cheeks, as she put her position before herself in plain words to fully comprehend his meaning.

"He loves me," she said to herself, "more than his father, and sister, and home. He will banish himself from all he loves that I may not feel his claim upon my affection."

"Think," he urged; "it is your life that is at stake."

"Yes; but that is not all," she answered.

"Oh, this question is too grave to answer lightly or hastily. I want to be alone and think it over."

There was a ladies' reading room at the end of the dining hall. He rose, and giving his arm led her there.

"I shall go to Finsbury, and see if anything has come. I will wait there until seven o'clock. If nothing has come then, may I hope?"

She did not answer, but an involuntary pressure of her hand upon his arm told him that his wish was hers. Impatient with herself, ashamed of her silence, she stopped at the door and gave him her hand.

"You make me feel so poor," she said; "I have nothing to give in return for your kindness—not even a few pretty words."

"What do I want more than you are telling me now?" he asked, reading her eyes. Then he turned away, and fled from the temptation to profit by their tell-tale sweetness.

In less than an hour he returned with a telegram, looking as if he carried his own death warrant—as indeed it was for all the dearest hopes of his heart. He gave it to Nessa without a word, and waited. When she had read it, she handed the trembling sheet to him, her bosom swelling with a sigh.

In the interval both had seen that if Mrs. Redmond were faithful she must not be forsaken.

Eric read—

"Take the next train to Brighton. You will find me in the waiting room. Can do nothing till you come."

"There is a train at ten minutes past five," he said, with a forced calm, as he returned the telegram, "and the cab is at the door waiting."

He stepped into the hansom after her. Never had moments fled so swiftly or been so precious to them; yet all were wasted. They scarcely spoke a word between Holborn and Victoria. He got her ticket and put her in a compartment.

"The time has nearly come to thank you," she said, forcing a smile, when the collector had nipped her ticket and closed the door.

"Not yet; not yet," he murmured, glancing at the clock in quick dread.

"We are sure to see each other again," she said.

He shook his head, but his quivering lips refused to speak.

"But, if you are not going home for three years, it is quite possible—"

"No, no—I shall never see you again," he said in a broken voice.

"Oh!"

And then dashing away the tears that had sprung in her eyes, she said—

"But I don't understand—you must tell me. We cannot part like this."

"I promised my father—before he would tell me your name, and where I might find you—that I would go back with him if you did not."

In this way he represented his promise never to see Nessa again unless she broke forever with Mrs. Redmond.

"Stand back there!" cried the guard and then he blew his whistle.

The time had come for Nessa to thank him, and for him to say farewell. They could not speak, for the tears that choked them; could not see each other, for the tears that blinded them. But Nessa put out both her hands with a sob, and he kissed them.

The train moved on; she saw him standing there desolate and broken-hearted. And thus ended Nessa's love affair.

CHAPTER XVI.—CHANGE.

When the train was out of the station, Nessa, having the carriage to herself, gave way to her feelings, and had a good cry, pouring out her heart in tears and sobs and plaintive little moans for Eric and herself.

It was his misery that touched her first; though her own position and prospects were not less pitiable, they only came in for the fag end of her sympathy.

It did her good to cry, but she was glad to get it over and be done with it.

"I shan't be stupid again," she said, putting her wet handkerchief away with a fluttering sigh. Nevertheless, the handkerchief came out again once or twice as a little after a shower of tears fell in thinking of her great loss; for it was an immense loss to one so friendless and homeless and imperilled as she, those warm-hearted, generous friends who had opened their arms to her and offered her a safe haven of rest and protection.

She was ashamed of those tears, and accused herself of ingratitude to Mrs. Redmond in regretting so much these unknown friends, but she had to put the lady's sacrifices and professions in a dazzling light to blind herself to the fact that her own loyalty had cost her dearly. As to what it might yet cost her, that she dared not think about at all.

When the train stopped at Three Bridges, Nessa drew herself into the further corner of the compartment to escape attention. The door opened and a gentleman got in. She closed her swollen eyes, feeling that they betrayed her, but she unclosed them with a start as something struck her skirt. The gentleman standing in the middle of the carriage with his hand on a travelling bag he had just put in the rack, a sheaf of papers in the other hand, and a rug over his arm, had dropped his umbrella. He apologized and picked it up.

"I'm afraid I've woke you up from a doze," he said.

"No, I was not asleep," replied Nessa.

"Sleep! I would defy any one to do that in these carriages—at this hour of the day, and at your time of life! May I offer you a paper to read?"

Nessa took one gracefully and drew a little nearer to the lamp.

The gentleman was elderly and spoke with the fatherly manner of a parson or a doctor. He looked like a country doctor, with his clean-shaven face, white tie, close buttoned frockcoat, and dark glasses. When he had disposed of his luggage satisfactorily, he put a pair of gold-rimmed glasses on his high-bridged nose, and opened a newspaper.

After reading for a couple of minutes, he glanced up at the lamp and changed his position. He read again for two minutes; then shifted, with another glance of vexation at the flickering light; finally, after a last attempt to read, he laid the paper down, and took off his glasses with a sigh.

"Reading is an utter impossibility in these carriages—at any rate, with old eyes," he said, smiling at Nessa as she laid down her paper. "Happily, for you, the journey to Brighton is not a very long one. I presume you are going to Brighton?"

Nessa admitted that she was going to Brighton.

"Not much of a place—Brighton," the old gentleman continued. "No ships on the sea; no trees on the land; nothing but shops and men and women—men and women. Well, after all, perhaps men and women are more interesting to a young lady than ships and trees—especially if that human society includes dear friends."

The look on Nessa's face as she assented to the proposition would have told a less astute observer than this old gentleman that she had no friends there whom she was eager to join.

"And even without ships the sea is interesting: don't you think so?" asked the gentleman.

Nessa was compelled to acknowledge that she had never yet seen the sea.

"You surprise me. In my young days—forty years ago—it was no uncommon thing for young ladies living in the country to stay at home; but nowadays, with the great facilities for traveling, it is quite phenomenal to find one who has never seen the sea—I mean one of that class that can afford to travel first rank. I am almost tempted to ask you why you have never seen the sea?"

Little as Nessa knew of men and manners, it seemed to her that this acquaintance was pushing inquiry to the borders of impertinence; but she accounted for it on the supposition that he must be a doctor, and for that reason accustomed to asking all sorts of strange questions; so she answered him without any resentment that she had lived all her life in a school; and with that took up *Punch* and opened it with the hope that this perfect stranger would not try to pump her any more.

He took the hint, having perhaps, learnt as much as he wished to know for the present, and dropping the subject, tried again to get through the leader.

"Ah, here we are at last!" he said cheerfully, when the train slackened speed.

"You will allow me to get your baggage out of the van, I hope?" he added, as he handed his bag and rug to the porter who came to the door.

"Thank you very much; I have no luggage," said Nessa.

"Well, that's a good job. May I call you a four-wheeler or a hansom?"

"I have no need of a cab, thank you."

"But my dear young lady, you cannot find your way in an unknown town alone."

"I expect some one to meet me here."

"Oh, that is better. Then now I have only to wish you 'good-evening.'" He bustled off with the porter, and Nessa saw no more of him until she came out of the waiting room with Mrs. Redmond, whom she found there. There was no one on the platform now except the old gentleman and three porters, who were looking carefully about upon the floor.

"Lost my glasses," he explained, recognizing Nessa as he looked up. "Had them in the carriage, you remember. Cord broken; somebody in the crowd must have filched them as I came up the platform. Such a lot of bad characters about here always," he added, addressing himself to Mrs. Redmond.

Mrs. Redmond inclined her head stiffly, her short nose lifted, her long lip drawn down, and hurried Nessa off. As they were getting into a fly, the old gentleman bustled off of the station with the porter grinning at his heels. He caught sight again of Nessa and came to the door.

"Found them in my pocket," he said, with a beaming smile. "Very stupid of me. Good-evening. I hope to meet you again."

He took off his hat and withdrew from the door. As the fly moved off he glanced at the back, and turning up his sleeve, jotted down the number on his shirt cuff.

Mrs. Redmond had told the flyman to drive to the Parade, but remembering on the way that she wanted some frilling, she stopped before a draper's, and Henson's Hotel being but a stone's throw distance, she paid the man and dismissed him.

Nessa was surprised to find that they were to stay at a big hotel; and when the lift had taken them up to their rooms, she was still more astonished to see a silver-mounted dressing case on the table, a couple of traveling boxes, and a variety of knickknacks and articles of clothing about the room that she had never seen before.

"Is this your room?" she asked.

"Yes. Yours is in there. The waiting room is on the other side. Nice, aren't they? You'll find a Gladstone with a few necessary things in it; rest you can get next week as you want them. What do you think of my dressing case?"

"It's very pretty, but how did you get it?"

"Paid for it, chummie," replied Mrs. Redmond, dropping her voice. "And a nice lot of things have come; but they wouldn't take us in anywhere without luggage, and I came away from St. John's Wood with nothing."

This was hardly true, for, despite the haste of her departure she had contrived to stow away under her waterproof a great many unpaid-for articles of value which she had since disposed of to a private dealer in such things whose advertisement she found in a local paper.

"By-the-by," she added, before Nessa could ask where she got the money to make her purchases, "you must pick the name out of your linen to-night before the chambermaids get a chance of prying into it. What are you going to call yourself? I've given my name as Mrs. Gaston Laucelles."

Nessa looked at her friend in uneasy silence. It had seemed to be natural and justifiable that Mrs. Redmond in leaving her husband should discard the name he had given her and resume her maiden name; but this second change, and the change proposed for herself, frightened her.

"Must we go under false names?"

"To be sure we must, unless you want the police to be down on us, as they certainly would if they found our names in the visitors' list. And where's the harm?"

"I don't know; only it seems as if we were doing something wrong."

"Oh, fudge!" exclaimed Mrs. Redmond, impatiently. "Lots of people change their names for no reason at all. The swells do it; so do actors and authors. If any justification is needed necessity should be an excuse. We don't want to do it; it's forced upon us by that villain Nichols, who swindled us, and that other villain, my husband, who has done nothing wrong—either of us."

"We thought we could pay, to be sure," said Nessa reflectively, "and we meant to pay, and we should if that man had kept his promise. No; I do not think we have done anything wilfully dishonest."

"Very well, then, that settles it. Look here, Nessa; you'll have to get all this silly squeamish nonsense out of your head. We've got to live, and we can't live by telling everybody we're a couple of ill-used women with not a penny in the world. We might get pity but we shouldn't get anything else. People don't like whining women, and steer clear of 'em as much as they can. We must put a bold face on it, if it is only to save your life. Every one likes a plucky little woman, and we shall get on well enough if we play our cards properly. Why, look here, we started with nothing and we've wriggled on pretty comfortably for three months; and there's no earthly reason why we shouldn't wriggle on comfortably for three years."

"But we thought we should get money on my expectations—"

"And so we shall. There are hundreds of money lenders who'd be glad to do it, and there's not all blackguards like Nichols. Oh, for Heaven's sake!" she added, petulantly, "don't pull such a confounded long face. One would think you had all the hardships to bear. Look at me—I've given up my home, every blessed thing in the world, and I've lost that cob and Victoria into the bargain. What have you lost? Not a farthing. You're better dressed and you're better off every way than when you ran away from school. Look at me? I don't look as if I were going to be hanged. Now look in that glass and tell me what sort of a nice, cheerful companion in misfortune you see there. I call it beastly ungrateful; that I do."

"Oh forgive me, dear," said Nessa; "indeed I am not ungrateful at heart. I know how much you have done for me. I mean to be bright and cheerful, and do my share in bearing the burden. But think, dear, that I am very young and unused to the world, and not able just yet to bear up so bravely as you."

Mrs. Redmond was mollified by Nessa's humility and the compliment to her own strength, and forgave her with a kiss.

"All right, chummie; we shall pull through name will you take?"

"Any that you think will do," said Nessa with a sigh of resignation.

"What do you say to Gladys de Vere?"

"Do you think it sounds quite like me?"

Nessa asked, in a tone of doubt, for the

name reminded her painfully of certain cheap novelettes the girls used to smuggle into school and devour in secret.

"Perhaps not; I thought of it for myself. Viola is pretty and uncommon."

Nessa assented timidly. It was a very pretty name, she said.

"Very well, then, Viola it shall be. Viola D' something; it must be D' with an apostrophe; D'Anvers; that will do; Viola some dinner. Now come down and let us get some sparkling!"

In the dining room Nessa felt the hot blood mount to the roots of her hair when her friend with the loud tone and peculiar pronunciation affected by persons who wish to be thought better bred and better educated than they are, said, "We will sit here, Viola," and told the waiter to see if there were any "lettabs for Miss D'Anvers." It seemed to her that the gentlemen looking at her from the adjacent table must see that she had not a name like that.

In the drawing room after dinner, Mrs. Redmond seated herself carelessly before the open piano and showed off her musical attainments in a piece of such painful withering to the elderly gentlemen after room dropped out one after the others to seek repose in the smoke room or elsewhere.

A couple of children were seated at a table with a book before them, looking unnaturally serious, as children do look in an hotel. Nessa caught sight of them at once, and was seized with a yearning to make those grave little faces gay. She had lived all her life among children; and herself, in many inclinations, was still a child at heart. She would have liked a good romp, for instance, or a game in which she could laugh without any feeling of restraint at harmless fun and innocent nonsense. In the new life she felt the loss of such outlets to natural mirth; the fun of the theatres did not seem to her quite innocent, and the nonsense of society as she saw it was certainly not laughable, and now that the conditions of artificial existence were becoming more and more artificial, her desire for simplicity increased.

She drew up a chair and seated herself between the two children who welcomed her at once, she being one of those who win love at first sight; and in a few minutes the little group was radiant with happiness.

The book given to the children to amuse themselves with was nothing but an illustrated guide to all the advertising hotels in the world; yet out of this dull material she got an endless amount of fun and sentiment, working into her description of the bald cuts so many quaint conceits and pretty fancies that each in turn became as fascinating as a fresh chapter in a fairy story.

"What a charming picture!" said someone on the other side of the room, struck by the sweetness and vivacity in Nessa's face.

"People always say that of my little ones," replied the mother to whom the observation was addressed, as she glanced complacently at the group. "Ah, they have some one with them—a young lady, pretty, and, I should say, distinguished by her manner. Who is she, do you know?"

"Not at all. A fresh visitor. She came, I believe, with the lady at the piano."

"That creature!" gasped the matron in alarm, and then, raising her voice, "Children, come and say good-night."

The children clung to Nessa. She rose and took them across the room, giving them up to their mother with a few graceful words which were received in cold silence and replied to by an offensively distant bow.

The sensitive girl smarted under this obviously intentional affront as though she had been struck with a whip. The smile and the colour went out of her face; she drew herself up; her features grew rigid; and lips and eyes answered scorn for scorn as she turned away. But up in her room she threw herself on her pillow and burst into tears, asking herself what she had done that she should be deemed no longer fit to speak to little children.

At another time her pride might have borne her fearless through this trial; but the events of the day, and a dull misgiving as to the blamelessness of her own conduct had unstrung her. She was herself again, however, the next morning when she stood on the parade looking in wonder for the first time on the sea. The looks of the sparkling waters, the pungent smell of the fresh breeze, the sound of the long, curling waves as they burst on the shingle, imparted their vivacity and vigour to her spirits, and she felt brave enough to face whatever enemy might come. She went on to the pier and stayed there, watching the water seethe amongst the columns and girders till hunger drove her back to the hotel.

Mrs. Redmond was also in high spirits, although she had not been down to the sea. She had made the acquaintance of two or three gentlemen the preceding evening—one a delightful military man—and was resolved to take apartments for the season in Brighton. In the course of the morning she found a suite of rooms on the parade to be let at the absurdly low price of ten guineas a week.

"Do you think they will do, dear?" Mrs. Redmond asked.

Nessa thought that nothing in the world could be pleasanter than to live where one could always see the sea and watch the streams of carriages and people on the parade.

"Very well, then; it is understood," said Mrs. Redmond to the highly respectable widow who let the apartments; "we take these rooms for the season at ten guineas a week. If we do not come in to-night, we shall come in on Monday. And now, Viola, dear, we shall go and lunch at the Royal."

The ladies did not come in that night, nor did they make their appearance on Monday morning, and for this simple reason, on Monday morning they were seeking apartments in Spital Square London.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Diseases from Dairy Farms.

The dangers to which dwellers in cities are exposed are not confined to those which originate within the city itself, through the ignorance or indifference of the inhabitants, or imperfect sanitary conditions. Dangers from without likewise threaten. One of these is the possibility of importing diseases from dairy farms. That this is a real and not an imaginary danger, experience has placed beyond all doubt. Many facts go to show that it is possible not only to carry the germs of consumption in the milk of cows infected with tuberculosis, but also the germs of such diseases as typhoid fever, scarlet fever, etc. The published accounts of the investigations made in or near London, under the direction of the health authorities of that city, concerning the cause of certain localized epidemics are among the most interesting and valuable of recent contributions to sanitary science. Epidemics of scarlet fever have been traced through the milk supply to dairy farms where one or two cows were infected with the disease, or where the disease was found in the dairyman's family. It has repeatedly been shown that localized epidemics of typhoid have been caused by the transmission of germs in milk supplied from dairy farms where persons were suffering from this disease, and in some instances the infection has been accounted for by the discovery that the milk pails were washed in water from a polluted well. A few days ago the prevalence of typhoid fever in a certain district of the city of Waterbury, Conn., caused an inquiry concerning the milk supply to be made. There were about thirty cases, and it was found that all of the affected families had been buying milk brought into the city from the farm of one Dibble, in the adjoining town of Middlebury. One of the Waterbury doctors says: "This man Dibble is sick with the fever, and his hired man was taken to the hospital some time ago, where he died of the same disease. A brook runs by the house, and it is possible that some of the germs were washed into it, and, as the cattle drank from it and the milk cans were probably washed in it, this stream would be an excellent channel for spreading the disease."

The immunity which Canada has hitherto enjoyed from tubercle losis among her herds makes the danger of contracting consumption in this way very remote to dwellers in Canadian cities; and were this the only disease to which consumers of milk are exposed our people might well dismiss their fears. But with respect to the importation of typhoid and scarlet fever germs the case is different. In this regard we are constantly exposed. That no epidemic has arisen from this cause is owing more to the good fortune or good sense of our dairymen than to any measures taken to prevent such a calamity. But that all the suppliers of this important article of food have sufficient hygienic knowledge to carry them through a visitation of typhoid in their families in such a manner as not to expose their customers to the disease, or that all have such a lofty estimate of their duty to their fellow men as would lead them to take extra precaution in a matter of this kind, is a view of the case which few have charity enough to believe. On the principle, therefore, that prevention is better than cure, some provision should be made by the health authorities, of large cities especially, for frequent inspection of the herds and farms from which milk is brought into a city for sale, and by properly qualified veterinarians and sanitary experts. The owner of the cows or some of his employes may be ill with infectious disease, or the milk may be exposed to infection from polluted wells or streams. It is plain that the use of the lactometer, which discovers whether the milk has been robbed of its cream or adulterated with water, is of no avail. To protect the community in this respect nothing less than frequent inspection of the dairy herds and surroundings where the milk is obtained will suffice.

Honors to Stanley.

Had H. M. Stanley been one of England's nobility, his marriage could not have been marked by greater social eclat or excited more interest in the fashionable world. His career shows that for the man who is true to himself and turns to the best account the gifts with which nature has endowed him, there is no obstacle, in England, to advancement by any path of eminence for which he is adapted. From a station the most humble Mr. Stanley has risen with credit to himself and advantage to mankind to a position in which the proudest in the land are honored by his acquaintance. The somewhat brusque reserve that characterized his demeanor in England after his first great success may well disappear before a recognition so cordial of his qualities, abilities and services. The Queen has been among the heartiest of his well wishers and in her gracious kindness to him and his gifted bride has faithfully represented the people of England and of the Empire in doing honor to the man who has toiled and endured and incurred many a hazard in the cause of civilization and humanity.

The Balloon in War.

The Russian military authorities who are instructing their soldiers to form into orderly battalions and load and fire their gun while swimming are about to open a school of tuition in the art of ballooning and add a regular aeronautic division to the army. An aeronautic park is to be established where officers and soldiers from the ranks will be taught whatever is to be known about sailing the air with a balloon. Except for observation and the transfer of messages, the balloon has not yet been useful in war. But with the advance of invention in the direction of new and deadlier implements of warfare, a good deal of fighting may be yet done in the clouds. It is a question, perhaps, whether Alexander the Great, Xerxes, and Hannibal would have admired or laughed at these modern innovations in the art military. They themselves never made their soldiers fight while swimming or sailing in the air, yet in their rude, simple, and businesslike way they conquered more territory and killed more men than modern generals with all the new military improvements.

Secretary Blaine has written a letter to Senator Frye, in which he points out that Spain has placed on American flour and other products duties which will keep them out of the Spanish West Indies, and insists that the States would be unwise to admit sugar from those islands free. He also urges at length that Congress should endeavor to secure reciprocity with the South American republics.

A Remedy for Black and Blue.

To prevent the blood from settling under a bruise there is nothing to compare with the tincture or a strong infusion of capsicum annuum mixed with an equal bulk of mucilage of gum arabic, and with the addition of a few drops of glycerin. This should be painted all over the surface with a camel's hair pencil and allowed to dry on, a second or third coating being applied as soon as the first is dry. If done as soon as the injury is inflicted this treatment will invariably prevent the blackening of the bruised tissue. The same remedy has no equal in rheumatic stiff neck.