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WOODVILLE, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 1879.

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Poetry.

CONCEALED AFFECTION.

He does not love me, I can see That sentence written on his brow; And though he greets me cordially, 'Tis friendship prompts him, not love's vow. He does not know how deep, how strong, The latent love for him I bear; He does not know that I so long Have been his silent worshipper.

He little thinks that I, who wear So calm a face when'er we meet, Beneath that calm exterior bear A heart I'd fain lay at his feet. O! I have silently, for years, Cherished his image in my heart: In all my dreams his face appears— Of every thought he forms a part.

And yet he deems me but a friend— O! how I long all to unfold; But truth, 'tis said, will oft offend, And better sometimes ne'er be told; Were I to tell him all I feel, How I have loved him from my youth, How I have struggled to conceal From every human eye the truth,

My joyous dream would then be past, And hope's bright star would set in gloom; And I should wake to find at last What I well know must be my doom. No, I will smother still the flame, And mask the feelings of my heart; I dare not hope his love to claim, Simply as friends we'll meet and part.

A GILDED SIN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DORA THORNE," "WEDDED AND PARTED," "A BRIDE FROM THE SEA," "FROM GLOOM TO SUNLIGHT," &c.

(Continued.)

'I will do it,' she replied. 'I will burn the will, and I will keep the secret until I die—and in death I will keep it still.'

Lady Brandon rose and drew the girl to her father's side.

'Swear it here,' she said; 'lay your hands on his breast—above his heart here. Now swear to me that you will never take Katherine's inheritance from her—that you will never betray the secret of your birth and parentage.'

Veronica swore it. 'Kiss his lips,' cried Lady Brandon; 'they would open to bless you if they could.'

Veronica kissed his lips. 'It will lie between us, father,' she said, 'this secret of ours.'

Then she started up in alarm. The struggle had been too much for Lady Brandon—she had fallen to the ground. The servants who came to her help thought she was ill from grief; and they bore her with pitying words to her chamber, while Veronica went back to her room like one moving in a trance. Not for long had she been heiress of Queen's Chace—not for long had she called herself Veronica Brandon, Sir Jasper's daughter. All the nobler, higher, better part of her nature had been roused by Lady Brandon's passionate appeal. She forgot in her enthusiasm all that the sacrifice would cost her. She remembered only that she was securing Katherine's happiness and saving her father's fair name.

She sat quite still and silent, while the birds sang outside her window, and the sunlight brightened the whole glad world—how many hours she never knew. She reflected that her golden dream was over, that she would be Veronica di Cynthia now until she died. Then she roused herself. The will must be burned before she saw Lady Brandon again. She would not read it. That would simply renew her pain, and could not benefit her. She must destroy it at once. She went to the box in which she had put it away, and took it out. She read, "The last will and testament of Sir Jasper Brandon, Baron of Hurstwood, &c." She kissed the name, and her tears fell on it. How could she destroy it? Curiously instead of being written on paper, it was written on thick parchment that she could neither tear nor cut. On this June day there was no fire anywhere. She could not go down to the servants' offices to burn it there, for she would be noticed, and harm might come of it. The only way was to have a fire made in her sitting-room, and burn it there. The bell was answered by Clara Morton, a pretty girl whom Sir Jasper had advised her to take as her maid. She carefully placed the will out of sight, and then, when the maid entered, she asked her to light a fire in her room.

'A fire,' repeated Clara Morton—'a fire here, miss?'

'Yes,' said Veronica.

'But,' objected the girl, 'it is so warm—it is quite a hot day, miss. I am afraid the heat will be too much for you.'

'There is no warmth here,' said Veronica.

And the maid, seeing the shudder that made her young mistress's graceful figure tremble, thought perhaps she was really cold. Still it was a strange thing to ask for on a June day; and more than once, as Clara Morton lighted the fire, she said to herself that it was unnatural, and that there must be some reason for it. Still she obeyed. But the fire would not light. Three or four times it went out, and each time Veronica had to ring again.

'How bent she is on it!' said the girl to herself. 'What can she want a fire for? There is something mysterious about it.'

At last the fire burned brightly; and then Veronica fastened the door and took out the will again. She held it in her hands, looking first at the parchment roll and then at the flames. It seemed to her as though she held something living. Wealth, honour, fortune, position, the honor of a noble name—these would all perish with the document when she laid it on the flames. Should she destroy it? Was it not like taking the life of some living thing?

'I will do it,' she said, 'not by halves, but generously. I make this sacrifice, and Heaven sees me. I make it to secure my sister's happiness and to save my father's memory. I make it with all my heart in return for their love for me, and I shall never regret it.'

Then she parted the coals and placed the parchment between them. In a few moments there was a thick smoke, and, seeing no more of the parchment, she thought it was destroyed. She watched the thick smoke as it rose; what did it bear with it of hers?

There was some one at the door—who could it be? She cried out, 'Who is it?' And Clara Morton answered—

'I want you very particularly, if you please, Miss di Cynthia.'

Veronica opened the door, and the girl looked wonderingly into her pale face.

'I have brought you a cup of tea, miss,' she said; 'I thought you wanted something.' Her quick eyes noted the heavy smoke in the fireplace; she withdrew without a word. In a few moments she was back again.

'Miss di Cynthia,' she cried, 'I wish you would come to my lady's room; I have knocked at the door several times and can get no answer. I am afraid there is something wrong.'

And Veronica hastened away, not noticing that she had left the girl in the room behind her.

CHAPTER VIII.

'What could you mean, Clara?' said Veronica, when, some ten minutes afterwards, she returned to her room. 'Lady Brandon was not even asleep, and she says that you have never even touched the door.'

'Is it all right, miss?' asked the girl, as though she were in a state of breathless suspense.

'Right? Yes. Lady Brandon never even heard you,' said Veronica.

Clara answered that her ladyship must have been asleep, but did not like to say so.

Veronica noticed that the girl's face was flushed and her manner strange; but she did not think much of it at the time. Presently Clara quitted the room, after saying a great deal more about the fright and relating an anecdote of a lady who she knew who had been fond dead of grief soon after her husband's death. Then Veronica wondered just a little that she should talk so much. As a rule the girl was respectful and docile. Left alone again, Veronica would not think of what she had done; that was all forgotten—all past. She was Veronica di Cynthia—had never been anything else. She looked into the smouldering fire—the last vestige of the parchment had disappeared. The papers she had kept; they could not hurt, and she felt that she would like to look at them from time to time. She went back to Lady Brandon's room, and clasped her arms round her.

'I have burned it,' she said—'it is all destroyed; and I have come to mention it for the last time—to tell you that you may trust me as you would yourself.'

Lady Brandon felt weeping on to her neck telling her that she was blessed, thrice blessed, for that she had saved herself and her child from what was far worse than the bitterness even of death.

'You may entrust your future to me, Veronica,' said Lady Brandon. 'I have two thousand a year of my own, and I will settle the half of it on you.'

So the matter was never mentioned again by Veronica or her father's widow. The next day they buried him, and his place knew him no more. All England mourned for the dead statesman, and never wearied of praising him, while the mantle of his greatness fell upon Lord Wynleigh.

A year had passed since the death of Sir Jasper. Lady Brandon had spent it at Queen's Chace. Some had advised her to go away to take her daughter abroad; but the Chace seemed to have an attraction for her. When the year that she had given to seclusion had passed, their first visitor was Lord Wynleigh. They were delighted to see him; it was such a bright, cheerful change. Lord Wynleigh was growing anxious now about the time of his probation. He made Veronica his confidant.

'I know that I can trust you,' he said, 'because you love Kate so dearly. I have laid the foundation of future fame and fortune. I grant that I have made no money; but that does not matter. Kate and I understand each other so well. She knows that if she had not one shilling in the world I should love her just the same—more, if possible; but we should have to wait for years. As it is, I do not see why we should not be married at Christmas. Do you, Veronica?'

How she thanked Heaven in her heart that she had done as she had—that she had sacrificed herself! If she had kept her inheritance, then Katherine could not have been married. Lord Wynleigh wondered at the light that came into the girl's beautiful face. How little Veronica dreamed at that moment of all that would come to pass before Christmas-time.

There had not been the least difficulty in the settlement of Sir Jasper's affairs; the will that he had made when Katherine Brandon was an infant was still in the hands of the family solicitor—everything was perfectly straightforward. Lady Brandon explained that she understood Miss di Cynthia's affairs, and should continue to act as her guardian. She had loyally kept her word, and had settled one thousand a year upon Veronica. She showed her gratitude to her in a hundred other ways; she was most kind to her; but the one subject was never mentioned between them again.

Sir Jasper's fair-haired daughter had become Baroness of Hurstwood; she was called Lady Katherine at home, and the bright days passed with naught save pleasant hours.

One beautiful July evening, when the red glow of the western sunset filled the sky, Veronica stood under the shade of the tall lime-trees, watching the evening light. A happiness had come to her, so great, so sudden, so entrancing, that she was dazed by it, bewildered. For Sir Marc Caryl had asked her to become his wife. She did not know until then all that slept in her heart—the love, the passion, the tenderness—and the waking had startled her. She was lost in wonder at herself. The crown and the glory of her womanhood had come to her. She rejoiced in the new and perfect happiness; she opened her whole heart to it. It was such chivalrous wooing, and he loved her so dearly. No one could ever have been so dearly loved before. She stood there thinking of it, with a smile of perfect content on her face, and as she did so Sir Marc came to her.

'I have been watching you, Veronica,' he said, 'until I have grown jealous of the sky and the foliage, and everything else that your beautiful eyes have rested on. What have you been thinking of?'

'Of nothing in the wide world but you,' she replied.

'Of me, sweetheart!' he exclaimed joyfully; and then he told her what he had come to ask—when would she be his wife.

'You are too kind ever to be cruel, darling,' he said, looking at the beautiful flushed face. 'I told you long ago how lonely my home is. I want "the angel in the house"—I want you there. You cannot tell how dreary it all seems to me. Veronica, when will you come to me?'

'Not yet,' she replied shyly—'it cannot be yet.'

'Why not?' he asked.

'You have only just found out that you love me.'

'Nay, Veronica,' he said, smiling, 'I found that out long since. I was coming last July to tell you so, but poor Sir Jasper had just died.'

She turned her face away lest he should see the quiver of pain on it.

'Sir Marc,' she said gently, 'you have never asked me any questions about my family or my home in Venice, or my fortune.'

'Lady Brandon has explained,' he replied. 'Your father was a great friend of Sir Jasper's, she tells me.'

Veronica made no reply. She could not tell him the truth, but she would speak no false word to him—never one. He continued—

'I care nothing about your fortune, sweetheart. I am a rich man—so rich that I am troubled at times to know how to spend my money. I lay it all at your feet. You are mistress of everything that belongs to me. When will you come to me, my Veronica? You have nothing to wait for. Do not be unkind and send me away.'

(To be Continued.)

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