

A Golden Heart

BY BERTHA M. CLAY

Author of "The Gypsy's Daughter," "Another Woman's Husband," "A Heart's Bitterness," "A Mad Love," "A Heart's Idol," "Gladys Grey," Etc.

(Continued from last week.)

When the servant came in to say that Miss de Ferras would be glad to see him for a few minutes, she had shown into the morning-room.

"You have forgotten these books," Sir Karl said. "Mamma thought, as I was driving past, that I might have them here—she meant at the house; but I thought that I might take the opportunity of saying good-bye."

She spoke in a careless tone, but as he took the books from her hand, he saw that the usual brilliant bloom had left her face, and that it was very pale; there was even a quiver of pain on it.

"I have something to say to you," she went on presently, then paused, and added impetuously, "You are not angry? If I had thought you would be angry, I would not have come."

"Why should I be?" He was touched by her emotion. "You would seek me, I am sure, unless you have something very particular to say."

But she seemed to be in no hurry to speak. Her lips parted once or twice, but she did not speak. Why should she ask to speak to him, and then stand silent, as though she had nothing to say? At last, in a low voice, she resumed—

"You said, when you were at Beauchamp, that you would come over to see me again before you started on your journey. Yesterday you wrote to mamma, saying that you would not have time to call. Why did you change your mind? What was the reason? Why are you leaving without coming near us?"

"I had a reason," he answered, his face flushing; "besides which, I wrote the simple truth. I had no time. I am leaving England sooner than I intended."

"What was the reason?" she asked.

"I cannot explain," he said doubtfully.

"Do you think any reason would justify your going away without saying farewell to old and true friends?"

"My farewell was none the less genuine for being written instead of spoken, Miss de Ferras."

She came nearer to him, and with a passionate cry of pain held out her hands.

"Do you judge me by yourself?" she exclaimed. "Do you think that a few coldly written words of farewell would suffice for me, even if they did for you? They did not; therefore I am here."

He had not one word to say. The beautiful, passionate face and ringing voice bewildered him. He was not prepared for a scene of this kind.

She laid her hand upon his arm, as though she would compel his attention.

"Do you think so little and so lightly of our friendship that you could go without having seen me again? I could not let you go so; I could not even bear the thought that you should leave England without my having seen you again. How could you do it? Oh, Sir Karl, how could you do it?"

The dark eyes were drowned with tears. Although he did not love her, and never would, he could not help being touched by her sorrow. What man could resist a beautiful face shadowed with grief, and lovely eyes shimmered with tears for his sake? Sir Karl was but human; he took the white hand from his arm and held it to his.

"I am afraid," she said, smiling through her tears, "that even if I

had not the books for a pretext, I should have come just the same. Do you think it is very wrong of me to have come?"

Sir Karl looked uncomfortable.

"What am I to answer?" he said, with a forced smile. "I cannot say that it is right, and it seems unkind to say that it is wrong."

"Promise me this, at least, that you will forget what you may think of the imprudence, and remember only the interest in yourself which prompted me to come. Will you promise me that?"

"Yes," he replied. "I may safely promise that. I am sure you meant it kindly."

He seemed to treat the whole matter as a friendly interview, and this did not please Lola.

"Kindly!" she repeated, bitterly. "What a word to use to me! I am not kind to you. In coming to say good-bye to you, I have been kind to myself."

She drew a little nearer to him, her warm, white hand lying still in his.

"How could you, Sir Karl, be so cruel as to write that note? Tell me honestly, had you no idea of the trouble and sorrow it would give me?"

"I know you are always very good to me," he replied; "but I could not possibly think that the going or coming of a mere acquaintance like myself would be of any moment to you."

He said this purposely; to show her that there was no love scene in which she had forced him, as it were, to take a part. She withdrew her hand suddenly from his clasp, and stood before him erect and haughty.

"Do you mean that you look upon yourself as nothing but a mere acquaintance—nothing nearer or dearer? Is that the end of all our happy hours together—a mere acquaintance—while I have been so proud and happy in thinking you my friend?"

He was again somewhat embarrassed. The passion in her face and voice startled him. What was he to do? He looked gravely at her.

"The word 'friend' is a sacred one," he said; "it implies a great deal—affection, fidelity, forbearance, and loyalty."

"And will you not give those to me?" she asked.

There was silence for some moments. He found that, so far from having extricated himself from a false position, he had increased his difficulties.

"That is much to ask," he answered, gravely. "I must consider the question in all its bearings."

"What!" she cried. "Do you hesitate when I ask you?"

"I do not hesitate. I say it is a very serious question. A pledge of friendship given and taken in that fashion is as grave a matter as—"

He paused; for the words that rose to his lips would, he knew, lead him into greater complications.

"I know what you mean," she said, with a sigh and a smile that was irresistible—"you mean that it is as grave a matter as a promise of marriage."

The splendid dark eyes raised suddenly to his face seemed to suggest the idea. Why did he not make that? He read the question in one glance, and he felt afraid of himself.

"Of course it is a solemn pledge," she continued, "but it is one that I think you need not be afraid of. What can one wish for more than to have a true friend? A man who rejected an offer of friendship would not be wise."

"I do not reject it, Miss de Ferras."

The smile that flashed back to him from the girl's beautiful eyes rendered him almost speechless.

"So you say, Sir Karl; but you do not seem to be in any hurry to accept it."

"I repeat," he said, "that you are very good to me. You know that the post calls friendship—love without wings. Your offer of it may be doubly valuable to me for this reason—I am not what is called a marrying man. I will tell you in all confidence that I loved once, and most unhappily. I have no heart to give; and, knowing this, I ought to value doubly the friendship of a woman."

Her face paled at first as she listened; then a gleam of proud defiance came into her eyes, which, if he had seen it, would have put him on his guard.

"You are right," she said; "if you are never to know the love of a man, friendship is the next best thing. I should not have believed, Sir Karl, that you were one to love in vain."

"I did not love in vain," he answered, sadly.

"Perhaps," she said, "some day, when we know each other better, you will tell me the story."

"I think not," he replied, all his former distrust returning. "The past is buried."

The gleam of defiance deepened in the dark eyes.

"Perhaps you are right. I shall always respect your confidence, and never ask any questions. I am glad you have told me this—I shall understand you better. And from now we are to be loyal friends. Sir Karl, from this day constant and faithful friends, loyal to each other at all times and in all places. Do you consent to this?"

How could he resist the sweet, thrilling voice.

"Yes. You honor me," he replied.

"How can I help feeling such a compulsion gladly?"

She placed her hand in his.

"Swear to me that so long as we both live you will be my true friend."

FAITH



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TO

BURDOCK BLOOD BITTERS.

As a spring medicine it has no equal.

It purifies and enriches the blood. Acts on the Kidneys, Liver, Stomach and Bowels. Cleanses and invigorates the entire system from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet.

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They contain specific ingredients not found in any other kidney remedy, and it is not surprising, therefore, that they make cures in very many cases where other remedies had proved altogether ineffectual.

We would caution you in purchasing the Tablets to see that the accompanying card, printed in green ink, and Dr. Pitcher's portrait and signature, are printed on the package. Refuse substitutes and imitations, as these are sure to disappoint.

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"I swear it," he replied. "That in your sorrow you will come to me, and in your joy you will seek me."

"I promise," he said, carried away by her beauty and her enthusiasm.

"You will not think of me any more as Miss de Ferras, but as your true friend Lola? Will you say those words to me?"

"My true friend Lola," he said, smiling, and the lovely face was almost transfigured with happiness.

"You must promise me that from this very hour, I shall take part in your life; that you will tell me your often; your likes and dislikes; that when you are absent, you will write me regularly with your address, so that I may write to you. Promise to do this, holding my hand in yours."

"I promise," he replied, thinking that the idea of friendship were very elastic, and then reproaching himself for the thought.

"Now I am happy," murmured Lola. "Let me tell you—and do not be shocked at me saying it—that I would far rather have your friendship all my life than the love of any other man."

"But," he said quickly, perceiving the danger at once, "my friendship will not supply the place of love."

"You do not know," she rejoined; "your friendship is worth more to me than the love of any other man can ever be. It makes me the happiest woman on earth, and it makes earth heaven to me."

"But, Lola, how am I ever to repay you or thank you? What am I to do in return for this wealth of affection that you lavish upon me?"

"You must repay me in kind. You have trusted me; I will trust you. I, like yourself, have loved some one so well that I feel some one never loves me, I shall go unmarried to my grave. See what comfort we can give to each other! This is the happiest day of my life, Sir Karl."

"You are very good, Lola, to say so. If I have added to your happiness, I am well pleased."

"You have not added to it; you have made it," she declared. "And now, Sir Karl, with the fear of all the offended proprieties, I must go. Still she held his hand fondly clasped in her own. "I am so glad I came," she added, "I hesitated long about it. It was the Squire, and the bridegroom's appearance as the bride attracted the most attention. Dolores had never looked so lovely. The fair, flower-like face was not rosy with blushes; it was pale, with a calm, steadfast expression; the violet eyes did not droop, nor did her voice falter when the solemn words were uttered which bound her heart, life, and love, to another."

After the wedding-breakfast, Lord and Lady Rhyworth departed for Deerpark Manor for their honeymoon. Lady Fielden kindly consented to remain at White Cliffe to entertain the ball which the Squire intended to give in honor of the event.

Lola had acted as chief bridesmaid, and on her dark face there was a look of triumph. All was safe now that Dolores was married; there would be no likelihood that Sir Karl would let his thoughts wander in that direction again. She had spoken a few words to Dolores before she started for Deerpark.

"It has been a pretty wedding, Dolores," she said, as she followed her to her room to bid her farewell. "Indeed I may say more than that. I have never seen a more beautiful one. I shall tell Sir Karl all about it when I write."

Lady Rhyworth knew that she had responded with Sir Karl. "He will be greatly interested in it," she continued.

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"You will think of me very often when you are away? I wonder whether it will make you any happier to know that one faithful heart will go with you everywhere. Will it comfort you to know that?"

"Yes," she replied, almost hating himself because he could not feel more grateful for all this kindness. "I must say good-bye," she said, with lingering regret. "It is hard as death—I have found you only to lose you. Good-bye, Sir Karl. I will keep my heart warm while you are away."

"The kindest words I have for you," she answered, "are the title you have given yourself—my true friend Lola."

"When you return will you promise to come and see me before you see any one else, Sir Karl?"

"Yes, I will, Lola; I can easily promise that it must indeed be good-bye."

Her hand lingered in his; the beautiful face was upraised to his; the dark eyes and fresh, sweet lips invited a caress; but he was restrained there should never be anything more than friendship between them. He did not touch with his lips either the white brow or the white hand.

"I will see you safely into your carriage."

But as the girl still held his hands tightly clasped in her own, he saw that tears were falling down her face.

"It is no pain for you to part with me," she said. "To me it is more bitter than death."

"Nay, Lola, Lola!"

"Nay, and more than that. You do not know, you do not understand! Do you think if the pain had not been more than I could bear, that I should have come here to see you, have risked so much and dared so much to spend these last minutes with you? If I could tell you all that is passing in my heart now, you would not go away."

"I must go in any case, Lola," he said, firmly. "Now let me see you to your carriage. I am afraid it will be dark before you reach home."

She lingered with him as long as she could; the arrangement of the rug and the wrapper afforded an excuse for leaning him by her side. It was so sweet and pleasant to her that he should interest himself in her comfort. Then the groom took his place, and there was no further excuse for delay.

"Good-bye, once more," she said. The little pony started off, and she had seen the last of him.

"He will be mine yet," she soliloquized. "I shall win him. How many a heart is caught in the rebound! Who was it that he loved, and loved in vain? I wish I had been in that woman's place. How I love him and how foolish I am! Yet I will win him, if love and patience can do it. People laugh at love and think it weakness or a girl's sentimental folly. Why, it is the strongest of human passions."

When she came to think over her interview with him, she was not dissatisfied. She felt a certain hope that when he returned it would be to her. She smiled at her own beautiful image in the glass.

"I must not repine or be dull while he is away," she said to herself. "When he returns! Ah, Heaven is good, and he will not be long away from me!"

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The day fixed for the wedding came at last—a fine, bright day, near the close of autumn. The little church at Deerpark was prettily decorated for the occasion, and the school children were there with flowers to throw before the bride. The Squire, in the pride of his heart, had invited almost more guests than White Cliffe could accommodate. The elite of the county were present at the ceremony. The bridesmaids wore costumes of cream-color and pale blue, and were remarkable for their beauty. The Squire, erect and handsome, seemed to have grown twenty years younger—so all declared—the bridegroom's appearance was all bred and aristocratic; but the bride attracted the most attention. Dolores had never looked so lovely. The fair, flower-like face was not rosy with blushes; it was pale, with a calm, steadfast expression; the violet eyes did not droop, nor did her voice falter when the solemn words were uttered which bound her heart, life, and love, to another.

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if used as directed will check the progress of this fatal disease and restore the afflicted to perfect health. Do not go to Florida, Madeira, California, Mexico or the Rocky Mountains. Remain at home with friends and home comforts around you and use Pul-Mo, which is the achievement of an century in medical science. Pul-mo is an absolute cure for Consumption, Throat and Lung Troubles, Coughs, Colds and all other consumptive symptoms.

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