LOVE REASONS NOT.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A MAN OF WAX.

It is not pleasent to tell how the foundations of a noble building are sapped; to ell how the grand, strong trunk of a noble ree is hacked and hewn until it falls; how the constant rippling of water wears away a stone; how the association with baser minds takes away the bloom from the pure ones; how the constant friction with the world takes the dainty innocence of youth away. It is never pleasant to tell of untruth, or infidelity, or sin. It is not pleasant to write here, little by little, inch by inch, how Lord Chandos was persuaded, influenced, and overcome.

The story of man's perfidy is always hateful—the story of man's weakness is always contemptible. Yet the strongest of men, Samson, fell through the blandishments of a woman. Lord Chandos was neither as strong as Samson nor as wise as Solomon; and that a clever woman should get the upper hand of him was not to be wondered at.

He was a brave, gallant, generous gentleman, gay and genial; he could not endure feeling unhappy, nor could he bear the thought of any other person's unhappiness; he had no tragedy about him; he was kind of heart and simple of mind; he was clever and gifted, but he was like wax in the hands of a clever woman like Lady Lanswell.

He was singularly unsuspicious, believed n most things and most persons; he never misjudged or gave anyone credit for bad qualities. He had no more intention of deserting Leone when he left England than he had of seizing the crown of Turkey. His honest, honorable intention was to return to her and marry her on the first hour that such a marriage could be legal. He would have laughed to scorn any one who would have hinted at such a thing. His love then was his life, and he had nothing beside it.

Gradually, slowly but surely, other interests occupied him. A great writer says: "Love is the life of a woman, but only an episode in the life of a man.' That was the difference—it was Leone's life; to him it had been an episode—and now that the episode was somewhat passed, other interests opened to him. He meant to be faithful to her and to marry her; nothing should ever shake that determination; but he had ceased to think it need be so hurriedly done; he need not certainly forego the pleasure of a tour and hurry home for his birthday; that was quixotic nonsense; any time that year would do. After his marriage he should lose his mother and Lady Marion; he would enjoy their company as long as all he could; Leone was all right, she had a luxurious home, the assurance of his love and fidelity, the certainty of being his wife—a few weeks or months would make but little difference to her. He did not think he had done any great harm in going to Spain.

He tried to convince himself that it was right; and he ended by believing it.

He felt rather anxious as to what Leone would say—and the tone of her letter rather surprised him.

She made no complaint, no reproaches; she never mentioned her pain or her sorrow; she said nothing of her long watch or its unhappy ending; she did not even tell him of the delayed letter—and he wondered. He was more uncomfortable than if her letter had been one stinging reproach from beginning to end. He answered it—he wrote to her often, but there was a change in the tone of her letters, and he was half conscious of it.

He meant to be true to her—that was his only comfort in the after years; he could not tell—nor did he know—how it first entered his mind to be anything else. Perhaps my lady knew—for she had completely changed her tactics—instead of ignoring Leone she talked of her continually—never unkindly, but with a pitying contempt that insensibly influenced Lord Chandos.

He was like wax in her hands; despite his warm and true love for his wife that idea became firmly engraved on his mind—he was a victim.

When once she had carefully impressed that upon him my lady went further; she began to question whether really, after all, his promise bound him or not.

In her eyes it did not—certainly not. The whole thing was a most unfortunate mistake; but that he should consider himself bound by such a piece of boyish folly was madness.

My lady had certainly other influences to bring to bear. The uncle of Lady Erskine, the Duke of Lester was one of the most powerful nobles in England—the head of the Cabinet, the most influential peer in the House of Lords, the grandest orator and the most respected of men. My lady enjoyed talking about him—she brought forward his name continually, and was often heard to say that whoever had the good fortune to marry Lady Erskine was almost sure to succeed the duke in his numerous honors. Lord Chandos, hearing her one day, said:

"I will win honors, mother—win them for myself—and that will be better than succeeding another man."

She looked at him with a half-sad, half-mocking smile.

I have no ambition, no hope for you, Lance. You have taken your wife from a dairy—the most I can hope is that you may learn to be a good judge of milk."

He turned from her with a hot flush of anger on his face. Yet the sharp, satirical shaft found its way to his heart. He thought of the words and brooded over them—they made more impression on him than any others had done. In his mother's mind he had evidently lost his place in the world's race, never to regain it.

The duke—who knew nothing of the conspiracy, and knew nothing of the young lord's story, except that he had involved himself in some tiresome dilemma from which his parents had rescued him—the Duke of Lester, who heard Lord Chandos spoken of as one likely to marry his niece, took a great fancy to him; he had no children of his own; he was warmly attached to his beautiful niece; and it seemed very probable that if Lord Chandos married Lady Erskine, he would have before him one of the most brilliant features that could fall to any man's lot. Many people hinted at it, and constant dropping wears away a stone.

The last and perhaps the greatest hold that the countess had over her son was the evident liking of Lady Marion for him. In this, as in everything else, she was most diplomatic; she never expressed any wish, that he should marry her; but she had a most sympathetic manner of speaking about her.

"I doubt, Lance," she said one day "whether we have done wisely—at least whether I have done wisely—in allowing Lady Marion to see so much of you; she is so sweet and so gentle—I am quite distressed about it."

"Why, mother? I see no cause for distress," he said, abruptly.

"No, my dear; men all possess the happy faculty of never seeing that which lies straight before their eyes. It is one of their special gifts—you have it to perfection."

"Do speak out what you mean, mother; that satire of yours puzzles me. What do I not see that I ought to see?"

"Nothing very particular. What I mean is this, Lance, that I am almost afraid Lady Marion has been too much with us for her peace of mind. I think when you go back to England on this wild-goose chase of yours, that she will feel it deeply."

He looked anxiously at her.

"Do you mother, really think that?" he asked.

"I do, indeed. Of course I know, Lance no words of mine will ever avail; but it seems to me you are in this position—if you leave Lady Marion and return to your pretty dairy-maid that Lady Marion will never be happy again. If you marry Lady Marion and dower that young person with a good fortune she will marry some one in her own rank of life and be much happier than she could be with you."

"Ah, mother," he said sadly," you do not know Leone."

"No, and never shall; but I know one thing—if I stood in your place and was compelled to make one or the other unhappy, I know which it would be. In marrying Lady Marion you make yourself at once and you delight me; you gratify one who knows and loves you. In marrying that tempestous young person you cut yourself adrift from fame, friends, and parents."

"But honor, mother, what about my honor?"

"You lose it in marrying a dairy-maid. You preserve it in marrying Lady Marion.

And with this Parthian shot my lady left him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN ACT OF PERFIDY.

So—inch by inch, little by little, step by step—Lord Chandos was influenced to give up his faith, his promise, his loyalty.

Lord Chandos could not quite trample his conscience under foot; under the influence of his mother he began to see that his love for Leone had been very unfortunate and very fatal; he had begun to think that if one of two women must be miserable it had better be Leone. That which was present influenced him most. He loved his mother, he was flattered by Lady Marion's love for him. So many influences were brought to bear upon him, the earl and countess were so devoted to him Lady Marion charmed him so much with her grace and kindness of manner, her sweetness of disposition her wonderful repose, that his faith grew weak and his loyalty failed.

There came an evening when they two—Lord Chandos and Lady Marion—stood alone in one of the most beautiful courts of the Alhambra. The whole party had been visiting that marvelous palace, and, more by accident than design, they found themselves alone. The sun was setting—a hundred colors flamed in the western sky; the sun seemed loath to leave the lovely, laughing earth; all the flowers were sending her a farewell message; the air was laden with richest odors; the ripple of green leaves made music and they stood in the midst of the glories of the past and the smile of the present.

"I can people the place," said Lady Marion, in her quiet way. "I can see the cavaliers in their gay dresses and plumes, the dark-eyed senoras with veil and fan. How many hearts have loved and broken within these walls, Lord Chandos!"

"Hearts love and break everywhere," he said, gloomily.

She went on:

I wonder if many dreams of this grand Alhambra came to Queen Catharine of Arragon, when she lay down to rest—that is, if much rest came to her?"

"Why should not rest come to her?" asked Lord Chandos, and the fair face, raised to answer him, grew pale.

"Why? What a question to ask me. Was she not jealous and with good cause? How can a jealous woman know rest? I am quite sure that she must have thought often with longing and regret, of her home in sunny Granada."

"I have never been jealous in my life." said Lord Chandos.

"Then you have never loved," said Lady Marion. "I do not believe that love ever exists without some tinge of jealousy. I must say that if I loved any one very much, I should be jealous if I saw that person pay much attention to any one else."

He looked at her carelessly, he spoke carelessly; if he had known what was to follow, he would not have spoken so.

"But do you love any one very much?" he said.

The next moment he deeply repented the thoughtless words. Her whole face seemed on fire with a burning blush. She turned proudly away from him.

"You have no right to ask me such a question," she said. "You are cruel to me, Lord Chandos."

The red blush died away, and the sweet eyes filled with tears.

That was the *coup de grace;* perhaps if that little incident had never happened, this story had never been written; but the tears in those sweet eyes, and the quiver of pain in that beautiful face, was more than he could bear. The next moment he was by her side, and had taken her white hand in his.

"Cruel! how could I be cruel to you, Lady Marion? Nothing could be further from my thoughts. How am I cruel!"

"Never mind," she said, gently.

"But I do mind very much indeed. What did I say that could make you think me cruel? Will you not tell me?"

"No," she replied, with drooping eyes, "I will not tell you."

"But I must know. Was it because I asked you, 'if you ever loved any one very much?' Was that cruel?"

"I cannot deny, but I will not affirm it," she said. "We are very foolish to talk about such things as love and jealousy; they are much better left alone."

There was the witchery of the hour and the scene to excuse him; there was the fair loveliness of her face, the love in her eyes that lured him, the trembling lips that seemed made to be kissed; there was the glamour that a young and beautiful woman always throws over a man; there was the music that came from the throats of a thousand birds, the fragrance that came from a thousand flowers to excuse him. He lost his head, as many a wiser man has done; his brain reeled, his heart beat; the warm white hand lay so trustingly in his own, and he read on her fair, pure face the story of her love. He never knew what madness possessed him; he who had called himself the husband of another; but he drew her face to his and kissed her lips, while he whispered to her how fair and how sweet she was. The next moment he remembered himself, and wished the deed undone. It was too late—to one like Lady Marion a kiss meant a betrothal, and he knew it. He saw tears fall from her eyes; he kissed them away, and then she whispered to him in a low, sweet voice:

"How did you guess my secret?"

"Your secret," he repeated, and kissed her again, because he did not know what to say.

"Yes; how did you find out that I loved you?" she asked, simply. "I am sure I have always tried to hide it."

"Your beautiful eyes told it," he said; and then a sudden shock of horror came to him. Great Heaven! what was he doing? where was Leone? She did not perceive it, but raised her blushing face to his.

"Ah, well," she said, sweetly, "it is no secret since you have found it out. It is true, I do love you, and my eyes have not told you falsely."

Perhaps she wondered that he listened so calmly, that he did not draw her with passionate words and caresses to his heart, that he did not speak with the raptures lovers used. He looked pale and troubled, yet he clasped her hand more closely.

"You are very good to me," he said. "I do not deserve it, I do not merit it. You—you—shame me, Marion."

She looked at him with a warm glow of happiness on her face.

"It would not be possible to be too good to you; but I must not tell you of all I think of you, or you will grow vain. I think," she continued, with a smile that made her look like an angel, "I think now that I know how much you love me I shall be the happiest woman on the face of the earth.

He did not remember to have said how much he loved her, or to have spoken of his love at all, but evidently she thought he had, and it came to the same thing.

"How pleased Lady Lanswell will be!" said the young heiress, after a time. "You will think me very vain to say so, but I believe she loves me."

"I am sure of it, who could help it?" he said, absently.

He knew that he had done wrong, he repented it, and made one desperate effort to save himself.

"Lady Marion," he said, hurriedly, "let me ask you one question. You have heard, of course, the story of my early love?"

He felt the trembling of her whole figure as she answered, in a low voice:

"Yes; I know it, and that makes me understand jealousy. I am very weak, I know, but if you had gone to England I should have died of pain."

He kissed her again, wondering whether for his perfidy a bolt from Heaven would strike him dead.

"You know it," he said; "then tell me—I leave it with you. Do you consider that a barrier between us, between you and me? You shall decide?"

She knew so little about it that she hastily answered:

"No; how can it be? That was folly. Lady Lanswell says you have forgotten it. Shall a mere folly be a barrier between us? No, ; love levels all barriers, you know,"

He kissed her hands, saying to himself that he was the greatest coward and the greatest villain that ever stood on earth. Words he had none. Then they heard Lady Cambrey calling for her niece.

"Let me tell her," whispered the beautiful girl; "she will be so pleased, she likes you so much." Then, as they passed out of the court, she looked at the grand old walls. "I shall always love this place." she said, "because it is here that you have first said that you loved me."

And the pity is that every girl and every woman disposed to give her whole chance of happiness in a man's hand was not there to see how women believe men, and how men keep the promises they make.

He told his mother that same night.

"I have done it," he said; "circumstances have forced me into it, but I have foresworn myself. I have lost my self-respect, and I shall never be happy again while I live."

But she embraced him with eager delight.

"You have done well," she said; "you have risen above the shackles of a miserable promise, and you have proved yourself a noble man by daring to undo the mad act of folly which might have blighted your life. I approve of what you have done, and so will any other sensible person."

And that was his consolation, his reward for the greatest act of perfidy that man ever committed, or a woman sanctioned.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"I HAVE PERJURED MYSELF."

So the Duke of Lester, all amiability and interest, gave the finishing touch to Lord Chandos' fate. When he had once spoken of the matter, there was no receding from it without a scandal that would have horrified all England. The duke's first words settled the whole matter; he held out his hand in frankest, kindliest greeting to Lord Chandos.

"I hear very pleasant intelligence," he said; and while I congratulate you, I congratulate myself that I am to have the good fortune of an alliance with you."

Lady Lanswell stood by, and there was a moment's pause; perhaps she never suffered such intensity of suspense as she did during that moment for her son's face grew colorless, and he looked as if he were going to draw back. The next minute he had recovered himself, and returned the duke's greeting, then, and only then, did the countess give a great sigh of relief; there could be no mistake, no drawing back from anything which the duke sanctioned.

That day there was a family meeting; the earl and countess, Lord Chandos, the Duke of Lester, Lady Marion Erskine, and Lady Cambrey; they all dined together, and the duke discussed with the countess the time of the marriage.

There was little said, but that little was binding: there could be no retreat. In the autumn, about September, the, countess thought; and she suggested that they should not return to England for the marriage; it could take place at the Embassy at Paris. There would be plenty of time for discussing these details; the thing now was to settle the engagement. It gave great delight; the earl, it is true, had some little scruple, which he ventured to press to his wife.

"I ought to add my congratulation," he said: "but I am in doubt over it. This seems a very suitable marriage, and Lady Marion is a most charming girl. But what about that other girl, my lady?"

"That has nothing to do with us," she replied, haughtily. "I am prepared to be very liberal; I shall not mind a thousand a year; she shall have nothing to complain of."

Lord Lanswell did not feel quite so sure but as he never had any management of his own affairs, it was too late to begin now. My lady would probably bring a hornet's nest about her ears—that was her own business; if he were any judge, either of looks or character, that young girl, Leone, would not be so lightly set aside.

However, he said nothing. Lord Lanswell had learned one lesson in his life; he had learned that "Silence was golden."

The matter was settled now; the duke had given his sanction, expressed his delight; several of the highly connected and important families belonging to the Lanswells and the Lesters had sent in their congratulations; everything was in trim.

There was no need for the duke to remain; he would join them in Paris for the wedding. No word was spoken on the subject between Lady Lanswell and himself, but there was a certain tacit understanding that the wedding must not take place in England, lest it should be disturbed,

The duke returned to England, taking back with him a sincere liking and a warm admiration for Lord Chandos; he was impatient for the time to come when he should be able to claim him as a relation of his own. The remainder of the party stayed at Granada; there was plenty to interest them about that charming city.

Some few days after his departure, Lord Chandos sought his mother. She had felt anxious over him of late. He looked like anything but a happy lover; he was thin, worn, and the face that had been so bright had grown shadowed and careworn. My lady did not like it. Any man who had won such a prize as Lady Erskine ought to feel delighted and show his pleasure.

So argued my lady, but her son did not seem to share her sentiments. She sat on this morning, looking very stately and beautiful in a dress of moire antique, with a morning-cap of point lace—a woman to whom every one involuntarily did homage.

Lord Chandos looked at her with wonder and admiration; then he sighed deeply when he remembered why he had sought her. He sat down near her, the very picture of dejection and misery.

"Mother," he said, abruptly. "I have behaved like a villian and a coward. In what words am I to excuse myself?"

My lady's face darkened

"I have not the pleasure of understanding you," she said. "Will you explain yourself?"

"I have perjured myself. I have broken the most solemn vows that a man could make. I have foresworn myself. Tell me in what words am I to tell my guilt, or excuse it?"

A contemptuous smile stole over the face of my lady.

"Are you troubling yourself about that tempestuous young person, Leone? Shame on you, when you have won the sweetest woman and the wealthiest heiress in England for your wife!"

His voice was broken with emotion as he answered her:

"I cannot forget that I believed her to be my wife once, and I loved her."

My lady interrupted him.

"My dear Lance, we all know what a boy's first love is. Ah, do believe me, it is not worth thinking of; every one laughs at a boy's love. They take it just as they take to whooping-cough or fever; it does not last much longer either. In another year's time you will laugh at the very mention of what you have called love. Believe me," continued her ladyship, proudly, "that Lady Marion is the wife Heaven ordained for you, and no other."

The handsome young head was bent low, and it seemed to my lady as though a great tearless sob came from his lips. She laid her hand on his dark, crisp waves of hair.

"I do sympathize with you Lance," she said, in a kind voice; and when Lady Lanswell chose to be kind no one could rival her. "You have, perhaps, made some little sacrifice of inclination, but, believe me, you, have done right, and I am proud of you."

He raised his haggard young face to hers. "I feel myself a coward and a villain, mother," he said, in a broken voice. "I ought to have gone back to that poor girl; I ought not to have dallied with temptation. I love Leone with one love of my heart and mind, and I am a weak, miserable coward that I have not been true to her. I have lost my own self-respect, and I shall never regain it."

My lady was patient; she had always expected a climax, and, now it had arrived, she was ready for it. The scorn and satire gave place to tenderness; she who was the most undemonstrative of women, caressed him as though he had been a child again on her knees. She praised him, she spoke of his perfidy as though it were heroism; she pointed out to him that he had made a noble sacrifice of an ignoble love.

"But, mother," he said, "I have broken my faith, my honor, my plighted word," and her answer was:

"That for a great folly there could only be a great reparation: that if he had broken his faith with this unfortunate girl he had kept it, and his loyalty also, to the name and race of which he was so proud, to herself and to Lady Marion."

Like all other clever women, she could argue a question until she convinced the listener, even against his own will, and she could argue so preciously that she made wrong seem right.

He listened until he was unable to make any reply. In his heart he hated and loathed himself; he called himself a coward and a traitor; but in his mother's eyes he was a great hero.

"There is one thing I cannot do," he said; "I cannot write and tell her; it seems to me more cruel than if I plunged a dagger in her heart."

Lady Lanswell laughed.

"That is all morbid sentiment, my dear Lance. Leave the matter with me, I will be very kind and very generous; I will arrange everything with her in such a manner that you will be pleased. Now promise me to try and forget her, and be happy with the sweet girl who loves you so dearly."

"I will try," he said, but his young face was so haggard and worn that my lady's heart misgave her as she looked at him.

"I have done all for the best," she murmured to herself. "He may suffer now, but he will thank me for it in the years to come."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Rations for an Imperial Journey.

Emperors on their travels take no pleasure, apparently, in that form of "roughing it" which involves dining without fish one night and without a choice of two liqueurs, or which implies a fast from strawberries in October. The table is perpetually and monotonously kept up to the high point o capital, and what this involves in the service of the imperial train may be gathered from the reminiscences, published in Russia, of the Czar's journey across his continent in 1888. It was this journey which was interrupted, it will be remembered, by the attempt to wreck the train. It is true that the way was through a country unmeet for the supply of Parisian confectionery, for instance, and that materials for this necessary were therefore inevitably included in the baggage. Even for fish the Caspian could not be trusted. For the fish of the Caspian is flavored with petroleum, which flows into it from the Baku wells. Nor was any confidence felt in the beef of the steppes. No one would answer for catching a filet in time to meet the food trains; for two special trains for this single purpose were not too much, some of the compartments being converted into freezing chambers. And to these were intrusted the oysters from Ostend, not without misgiving. The trains went careering on to prepare the dinner, the menu flying back by telegraph. Not on wheels, however, was the delicate buisness of the cookery accomplished. Kitchens, a day's journey asunder, made a chain across Northern Europe and part of Asia. Each kitchen was manned by 300 persons, whose duties began and ended with the solitary effort of a single dinner. Then there was what may be called the rolling stock of servants, who travelled with the Czar and the Czarina and ministered to the lesser solemnities of luncheon. It was during luncheon that the crash occurred, and it was owing to the extremely substantial building of that important compartment that the imperial lives were not lost.

What it Costs to Govern Quebec.

According to the public accounts of Quebec the provincial income of the year amounted to $4,320,427 and the expenditure to $5,526,056, showing a deficiency of $1,205 600, by which sum the public debt was augmented. About one-half of the expenditure of the year was uncontrollable. In this class are interest on the debt railway subsides, repayment of railway guarantee deposits, and the completion of the Montreal Court-house extension. Together these services involved an outlay of $2,918,564, leaving a balance of $2,608,000 to represent the expenditure with respect of which it was possible to practise economy and introduce retrenchments. To ascertain the extent, therefore, to which the present Government has employed the pruning knife, it is necessary to deduct the expenditure in 1892 upon interest, railway subsidies, repayment of guarantee deposits, and the Montreal Court-house from the total outlay of that year. The services enumerated cost $2,594,800 and the aggregate expenditure was $5,987,737 in 1892, so that the controllable expenditure amounted to $3,393,000 in that year, as compared with $2,607,500 in 1894, showing a saving of $785,500, or more than 25 per cent., to have been effected by the present Government in the controllable expenditure of the province in the space of two years.

In the shop window of a (Birmingham) barber recently was the following notice to customers: "Municipal election—All unionists shaved free, Gladstoneians 2d each, owing to the length of their faces."

What mechanical power makes a cat fal on its feet has been puzzling the French Academy of Sciences. A series of sixty instantaneous photographs exhibited before it showed the complete process in every stage, and demonstrated scientifically that the cat does turn in the air and does land on its feet, but did not betray the motive power. The general impression was that it was due to the leverage obtained by contact with the surface from which the cat dropped, so to decide this point a new set of photographs will be taken of a cat dropped from a string suspended in the air.

The transsiberian railway, which is to be the longest in the world, has now been opened as far as Omsk, and one may go there from St. Petersburg, 2,200 miles, in less than five days. The difficulties encountered have been prodigious; and in draining a bog sixty miles wide engineers and men had to live in huts built on piles and accessible only in boats. Four thousand masks were bought to keep off the venomous mosquitos.