STRANGELY WEDDED.

THRILLING STORY OF ROMANCE AND ADVENTURE.

CHAPTER XXV.

A GREAT SURPRISE.

Verily, women are wonderful creatures! Ethel, a prisoner in her own house, with no friends to speak of, and no one in whom she could confide, had fought, resent, and then Major Dennis was buried in the lot.

A month or more after, she attended the following days, Major Pottinger, who gave funeral, including a shine to be envied singly in ye evidences with the new Lord Rosstrevor; intimate terms present also a golden-haired lady and there was a stranger, who cried quietly all of striking resemblance all during the whole of behind a thick veil, the impression.

Then they went back to the Flats and in the presence of Lord Frothingham and those who had been invited to attend the funeral, the dead man's will was read.

It was a very simple one. He left everything of which he died possessed to his wife, with the exception of a certain diamond ring which he wished to pass as an heirloom with the Frothingham title.

To a there came a very odd statement, perhaps the oldest ever put down as any man's last will and testament.

"I believe"—it said—"from various causes I shall not live till I am fifty years old. As my wife would then be but a young woman, and is not a woman well calculated to lead a lonely life, and also has been an exceedingly good wife to me in every way, I wish to be clearly and distinctly understood by all who feel any concern that it is my express wish that, after my death, she should please herself in the matter of marrying again. If she chooses to remain a widow, well and good; if she chooses to marry again, it is with my full and hearty approval and consent."

When the lawyer came to an end there was a dead silence which lasted for some time. Then Lord Frothingham spoke.

"Do you make time will, Mr.—Mr.—?"

"Brewer," said the man of law, urbanely.

"Mr. Brewer, I ask."

"This document in my possession has it been up to date."

"It has been in my possession and mine alone. It has not been out of my private keeping for an hour."

"Then," said the old lord, got up and walked across the room to Ethel, who was sitting speechless beside her mother.

"My dear Mrs. Dennis," he said, "I suppose that poor Cosmo has made a very poor and generous will. I suppose it is as a surprise to you as to all of us?"

"I never knew a word of it," she answered. "I did not even know that Cosmo had made a will."

"It was made within a week of my marriage," the old lord said grimly. "And although it is not a will to further my interests, I am bound to say that Cosmo, poor fellow, gave quite within his rights in making it. And now I will wish you good-bye, Madam, and offer my services for the future, my dear, if they ever will be available to shake off the yoke of your mother-in-law."

Then he turned to Mrs. Mordaunt for the first time in her life. "Listen to me, young—" he said, speaking out bravely in a little of the old lady quaver in her voice. "I see that I must speak to you very plainly. Because I was married, you controlled my life, my body, my very soul, with a rod of iron. And you sold me just as you pleased, as I had been a puppy or an old gown that you had grown tired of.

"I will take a year and come now, and can do what I please—and after, this I will arrange my own life if you please. If I go right it will be my own business; if I go wrong, then you need not blame yourself for it. I propose to day I take the responsibility of my life upon myself, if you please, Mother."

And this, cried Mrs. Mordaunt, indignantly, "is all the thanks you give me for the years and years of making you your own mistress and mistress at twenty three years ago, and seven thousand a year, and a home such as this that you will be with the young widow made a gesture of yearning and despair. "Oh! Mother, can't you see that I would give my seven thousands a year over and over again, if I had them to buy back my youth, my last nerve, my happy child that I had before ever I had begun your work in preparing for the marriage market. I was a happy child, and I am such a wretched woman! Oh! Mother, can't you see that I would give my seven thousands a year over and over again, if I had them to buy back my poor child?"

"Big Ethel shook her head."

"Oh, no, I couldn't go to Blankhampton for the world, and for the world."

"And why not?"

"Why, they would ask so many questions and stare at me so, dreadfully. Besides, there is a great deal to do in London and—and I don't want to go away just now."

"Well, I am not able to stay with you any longer," said Mrs. Mordaunt, with decision. "I should have thought that you would be glad to get away from the place where your husband was murdered."

"So I shall be—but I don't want to run away," Ethel cried.

"Ah! well, as you please—I daresay you know much better than I what is good for you. Let us talk about something else, dear, for a little while. I shall go home to-morrow morning—it is the last time I shall leave your father alone for a long time. Remembering that I shall not see you for two months—that I shall not see you for two months—that I shall not see you for two months—