

NELLO.

THE STORY OF MY LOVE.

CHAPTER V.

To-morrow I closed my eyes that night in an ecstasy of delight. The calm serenity of the night-skies, the gentle ripple of green leaves, the silver light of the moon, and the dark handsome face of my lover—I dared in my own heart use the word—were with me in my dreams. The song of the nightingales and my lover's voice blended harmoniously, greeting my ears with sweet melody as I dreamed on of the morrow. "Felicia—good night, Felicia!" was the burden of the melody; and its ravishing strains fell soothingly on my senses.

"To-morrow" was come. The sun was gilding the earth with its resplendent rays, the birds carolled their songs of delight, the gentle wind, kissing the flowers, wafted their perfume abroad. Nello was coming to tell me "what it all meant." I knew that that word explained it, and that that word was "love." He was coming. Patience—he would be here soon, and then my life would be crowned by the possession of his love!

I was standing under the spreading cedar boughs, anticipating in thought the happiness that was to be mine, when a letter was brought to me. I had gone thither knowing that he must pass by the spot. The golden sunlight that pierced through the drooping boughs was warm and pleasant. He would stand beside me, and he would tell me "what it all meant." Taking the letter from the bearer, a thrill passed through me. I knew by instinct that the note was from him, I opened it hastily. It ran thus—my first lover—

"I had hoped to be with you to-day, Felicia, as I have much to say to you. But I have just received a telegram from my agents in Ireland, and, if I want to save my property there from utter destruction, I must go at once. I shall not be long absent. I hope to be back with you before the nightingales have ceased to sing."

Though the sun was shedding its warmth around, a sudden grey chill fell over everything. All the gold seemed to fade from the sunlight, the perfume to depart from the flowers, the light from the skies, the glory from earth and sea. A mist of passionate tears rose before my eyes as I saw my cup of happiness dashed to the ground. It was not "to-morrow" after all; and I remembered how people always said that to-morrow never came. But he would return. I felt grieved, disappointed, but not fearful. Lady Saxon had often spoken to me of their Irish estate, Loochin, and had expressed a wish that Lionel would sell it. The tenants were always in rebellion against the agent, and she was nervous lest harm should come to her son. He laughed at the idea. He was not afraid of disaffection or open rebellion, so he had gone amongst them; and I—

Well, the summer was not over, the roses had not ceased to bloom. All would come right if I had but the patience to wait. I should soon again see the face I loved so well.

But, notwithstanding my self-administered solace, a chill had come over the warm summer day, and I wondered vaguely why I had allowed my own life to be so completely absorbed in his. Why should this terrible dread possess me because he was not with me? And what—oh, the horror of it!—what if he never came back!

An hour afterwards, while I was standing under the cedars a second letter came. It was from Lady Saxon. Brief, but to the point, it ran—

"Come and comfort me, Felicia—I have lost my son again! I want to talk to you about him."

I went at once. Aunt Annette kissed me with a quiet smile. I think she understood more of my affairs than she chose to let me know.

"My son, my son!" That was the burden of Lady Saxon's cry; yet she was not sorry that he had gone to Ireland, for she firmly believed in his ability to allay the anger aroused against his agent. "When the people see him, they will be sure to love him," she argued with motherly pride. "There could be no better cure for disaffection than seeing and conversing with my son."

And when the day was over she walked with me to the end of the drive.

"You have comforted me greatly, Felicia," she said. "What should I do without you? I wish you were my own daughter."

A few moments afterwards she added— "Oh, Felicia, I should be the happiest woman in the whole wide world if Nello fell in love with you, and you agreed to marry him! I wonder, if he asked you to be his wife, whether you would say 'Yes'? I almost think you would."

I could laugh happily at the words, knowing what he had whispered to me.

"My daughter Felicia," she murmured when I had taken my seat in the pony-carriage—"fair as the sweetest flower that blows."

And with those pleasant words ringing in my ears I hastened home.

The last rays of the setting sun were falling over Jesmond Dene as I drew near; a golden light lingered on the distant sea, on the pine-wood, on the rushing river, on the green pastures and the picturesque pile of buildings which I had learned to love so well. No warning of coming tempest came to me; no shadow lay on the lovely Dene; no presentiment of coming evil possessed me, but there at the great entrance door, looking pale and anxious, stood my aunt Annette.

She held out her hands to me as I ascended the flight of marble steps. "Welcome home, my dear!" she said; but there was a strange ring in her voice, and a troubled look was on her face. "You look tired, Felicia," she continued; "you must have a glass of wine. Come in here with me."

Somewhat to my surprise, she led the way into one of the small drawing-rooms that we seldom used, and stood by in silence while I drank the wine.

"There is a little surprise for you, Felicia," she began in a trembling voice. "Mr. Benson is here."

Mr. Benson was the family solicitor, and had for many years been entrusted with the management of the Jesmond affairs. Sir William had the most implicit faith in him. "Benson says so!" was affirmation strong enough for anything. Benson had advised him with all his investments; Benson had drawn up the will which made me, in consequence of Paul's death, heiress of Jesmond Dene; Benson had brought us down to the

Dene, and had remained with us a whole week, instructing me in my new duties, and teaching me much of which I had previously been quite ignorant. It was he who had approved all my plans for building, and who had told me that I could not spend Sir William's hoarded thousands in a better fashion.

I felt no alarm at hearing that he had come, even though it was suddenly and without notice. I was much troubled about aunt Annette, for she seemed so unlike herself. "He came soon after you had gone to Dunroon," she went on nervously. "He wanted me to send for you, but I thought you should have one more happy day."

"Mr. Benson would never make me unhappy," I laughed. "He is always the bearer of good news to me."

She looked at me wistfully. "Mr. Benson desires a long talk with you on business matters," she explained. "You had better defer it until after dinner."

"I will do that with pleasure," I answered lit le imagining the nature of the business.

Had I been less engrossed in my own love story, I should have known from Mr. Benson's nervous hesitating manner that something of more than usual importance was afoot. While I was talking to the grave old lawyer, while I was dining with him, I was in fancy looking into my absent lover's face and listening to the notes of the nightingales.

"Can you spare an hour this evening," inquired Mr. Benson; "or shall I defer my business until the morning?"

It appeared to me that he was not unwilling to defer it. I had never seen him so unlike himself—confused, hesitating, glancing at me strangely, beginning a speech, then ending abruptly.

I said to him at last— "You are not well, Mr. Benson."

"No, I am in great distress," he answered.

"In distress?" It was such a strange confession for him to make. "In distress?" I repeated. "You are not ill, I hope? You have not met with any misfortune?"

"I am not ill, and the misfortune that depresses me is not mine," he said.

"Not yours?" I exclaimed; and his grave manner gave an additional significance to his words.

"The fact is," he continued, looking at me, "I have, for the first time in my professional life, made a terrible mistake."

I could only repeat the words, "A terrible mistake!"

"It is not often that lawyers do that," he said. "They are generally very cautious. I fear that in this particular business I have been neither. A lawyer," he continued, "above all men, should well consider every step he takes. In this one case I did not."

He was talking to a girl whose whole soul vibrated to the music of the nightingales and the sound of her lover's voice; and even those words, portentous as they were, did not startle her.

"Yet," he continued, "I cannot see how I could have helped it, or how I am to blame, though blame must lie somewhere."

"It does not lie with you, I feel sure," I said, with a faint attempt at consolation, and as a proof of my confidence in his legal acuteness.

"The worst of it," he continued, "is that the mistake I have made affects you."

"Then," I said, "it can be easily remedied." For, in my ignorance, I did not think there could be any mistake made which would seriously affect me.

"I am afraid," he went on disregarding my interposition, "it will be a terrible blow to you. You seem so happy here."

"I am very happy here—indeed it would be impossible for any one to be happier," I replied.

"You remember the terms of Sir William's will, Miss Gordon?" he continued.

I answered that I remembered them well.

"The whole estate descended to his son Paul. The title is hereditary; the estate is not. If Paul married and had children, it went to them. If he died unmarried, it became yours."

"Yes; and it is mine, thank Heaven!" I said.

"So I thought. Heaven knows I thought so," he answered; "but, Miss Gordon, it appears that Paul was married. He has left a widow and an only son."

CHAPTER VI.

The lawyer's words fell like poisoned arrows on my heart. Paul had left a widow and an only son! That meant that I was no longer mistress of Jesmond Dene—that the splendid inheritance I had planned to do so much good with had slipped from my grasp.

There was silence between us for some time—a silence fraught with unutterable horror to me. Mr. Benson broke it at last.

"I blame myself," he said. "I ought to have made enquiries, and have been satisfied beyond the possibility of a doubt that Paul Jesmond had not married; I ought to have ascertained that before helping to place you in possession. I am afraid it is a terrible blow to you," he added.

"Yes, it is," I replied—so great a blow that I cannot at present realize it. It has stunned me."

"It stunned me," said Mr. Benson. "I was for many hours quite unable to comprehend the result of this deplorable blunder. Now I see plainly enough what I ought to have done. I should have written to India for further information before you were formally installed as mistress of Jesmond Dene."

"It would have been better," I said mechanically. "You are quite sure that there is no mistake now?" I added.

"No, everything is too well authenticated for that. There is no mistake this time. I cannot tell you how grieved I am—how I blame myself; but there had never been any word of Paul's marriage. He had not mentioned it, and it seems to have been but little known, even among his friends in the Army. You bear the blow well, Miss Gordon."

Nevertheless, bravely as I bore this crushing reverse of fortune, it was a terrible blow to me. For a time it had banished the cherished memory of my lover's face. But slowly it began to return, and I took heart once more. The first thought that presented itself clearly to my mind was this—that, if he loved me, change of fortune would not affect him, and whilst I possessed his love nothing on earth could affect me.

By degrees hope seemed to come back to my heart, the color to my face, clear thought to my brain. Then I realized that I was no longer mistress of Jesmond Dene, and that I must give way to my cousin's little son, I confess, between smiles and tears, that the very words "My cousin's little son," softened and warmed my heart to the child as nothing else could have done, and robbed the little son—the son of the bright-faced handsome lad who had been so kind to me in my girlhood, who had kissed me, and had promised to marry me when he had seen the world! He had married some one else, and I must give way to his child, the rightful heir to Jesmond Dene. Still my heart warmed to him for my dead cousin's sake.

"As you will remember," continued Mr. Benson, "there was no cordiality between father and son. Sir William liked to save money; Paul enjoyed spending it. The father's miserly ways made home hateful to the son. They quarrelled fiercely before they parted, and I should imagine from the tone of the letters that passed between them that they were never on friendly terms again. Sir William refused him an allowance for some time, so deeply rooted was his anger. He afterwards relented; but by that time the young man's heart was hardened. I know that Sir William wrote to him several times on the subject of marriage, urging him to take great care not to be so foolish as to fall in love—that he must not marry until he returned to England, and then he was to marry a wealthy woman. Money was to be his first consideration. Sir William told me all about these letters. He added also that he had never received an answer to them. 'That accounts,' remarked Mr. Benson, 'for the young fellow's silence about his marriage. There is no doubt he believed implicitly that, if his father knew of it, he would disinherit him and leave him penniless, for he married much beneath him, his wife having no dowry except a beautiful face.'"

"Who was she?" I asked.

"Her name was Gabrielle Fairfax," he replied, "and she was living in the family of Major Esmond as governess to his children—a very unusual thing in India; but the Esmond children were strong and healthy, and their parents did not care to part with them. She was a most beautiful and a very good girl, so Colonel Brownlow tells me, clever and accomplished, belonging to a respectable English family. She had, of course, no fortune, and no prospect of ever possessing any. Paul Jesmond fell in love with and married her. No one knew of the marriage, except Major Esmond and his wife. Paul dared not let it be known, lest his father should hear of it. He never spoke of it, even to his most intimate friends; but he told Major Esmond that when he returned to England he should take his wife straight to Jesmond Dene, and trust to her lovely face to win him his father's forgiveness. Miss Gordon, I can hear in fancy his cheery young voice saying, 'When my father sees her, he will relent.' He was always sanguine, poor Paul!"

I knew that—my bright-faced handsome cousin! Mr. Benson went on—

"He rented a pretty little house on the Neigherry Hill for his wife, and they lived happily for two years no one guessing his secret. A son was born there; and Paul Jesmond who knew the importance of that son's birth, took the precaution of having it properly registered, and of keeping a copy of the registration. The child was christened by the resident chaplain, who, in his turn, faithfully kept the promise of secrecy that he had given. Paul took yet another precaution, which, for one so habitually careless as himself, seems to me somewhat remarkable. He gathered together the needful papers—his certificate of marriage, and the certificate of his son's birth—and placed them together, with a long letter to his father, telling him all the story of his marriage, and begging, if anything happened to him, that he would be kind to his wife and child."

"Let little Guy succeed me," he wrote. "Do not visit the offences of the father on the son. However faulty I may have been, do not dishonor my boy. My marriage may displease you, but you will forgive me when you see my wife's face. And she is as good as she is beautiful. I loved her with all my heart. There comes to me, father, at times a presentiment that I shall die young. If I do, be kind to my wife and child. Let my wife have the honor that falls to the widowed ladies of Jesmond Dene, and let my son succeed to the estate. I am your only son, you will not refuse my prayer. I am writing this, so that should anything happen to me, my wife may bring it in her hands to you, and you, in your turn, will do justice to her."

"So runs the letter, Miss Gordon."

By that time my eyes were full of tears, and I had begun to forget my own troubles, and to think only of the handsome bright-eyed lad who had loved me when I was a child, and of his little son.

"It appears," continued Mr. Benson, "that Paul fell ill very suddenly with one of those terrible malignant fevers so common in the East. He had been appointed to some slight military command where he would be detained three months. The name of the place to which he was sent, and where he died, was Faizabad. As a matter of course, he bade farewell to his wife, she knowing that the separation would be for three months; and during that time, not having expected to hear from him, she was not anxious about him. His comrade in the fatal expedition was Captain Archie Hartigan, who was by his side when he died. It seems that on the day before his death, while some little consciousness still remained, Paul placed a small package in Captain Hartigan's hands, with these words, 'find out my wife, and give her this to take to my father.' Captain Hartigan intended to fulfil the commission at the earliest moment; but, even before his friend was laid at rest, he himself was stricken down with the same fever, and lay for some time hovering between life and death. Other officers were

Faizabad, and for many weeks the package left by Captain Jesmond was not delivered. The first thing that Captain Hartigan did, when restored to health, was to go to Colonel Brownlow and give him Paul's message—"Find out my wife, and give her this to take home to my father." The Colonel declared that Captain Jesmond had never married. He made the fullest possible inquiries, but could obtain no confirmation of any such marriage. None of Paul's brother officers knew anything of it. Major Esmond did not belong to the same regiment; and unfortunately just at that time he was away on military business, so that there was no one to throw any light upon

the matter. But, when Major Esmond returned, and heard what had happened, he went at once to Colonel Brownlow, and told him the whole story. The Colonel was not very well pleased, and blamed Major Esmond for having connived at a secret marriage of a young officer. Then Captain Hartigan was sent to find the young wife, so soon widowed, and to communicate to her the intelligence of her husband's death. He found her with her infant son. She was beautiful as a dream, and good as she was fair. Her distress was terrible when she learnt the bad news, for it appears that she had dearly loved her husband. At first she refused to believe that he was dead; and then she declined to go home to England. She wanted to be left alone to die in peace where he had left her. It was represented to her how greatly such a course would injure the prospects of the boy, who on his grandfather's death would in all probability become Sir Guy Jesmond and master of Jesmond Dene. For the child's sake she consented to do what she would never have done for her own—return to England, to see her husband's father. She would not however, accept any escort, though Colonel Brownlow would have placed her under the protection of an officer and his wife who were shortly returning to England. Mrs. Esmond implored her to take a maid; but she would not; she would travel alone, her only companion being her fatherless boy. Colonel Brownlow gave her the precious package, and she sailed from Calcutta in the *Caspian Queen*, and reached London safely."

"Reached London!" I exclaimed. "Then she is near—quite near?"

"Yes," replied the lawyer gravely. "The news of Sir William's death was not known in the regiment when she left, and Colonel Brownlow, understanding that I was the family solicitor, advised her to come straight to me. She did not do so, but allowed a fortnight to elapse, and then she came."

"Then you have seen her?" I cried.

"Yes," he answered, "I have seen her," and the old lawyer was strangely silent after that.

"What about her?" I asked eagerly.

"What do you think of her?"

"She is simply the most beautiful woman I ever beheld," he replied.

"And good as beautiful?" I asked again.

"I could not judge; she was not with me very long—though long enough to convince me that her claims are valid and legal. She is Lady Jesmond, and her son is Sir Guy."

"Heaven bless my cousin's little son, Sir Guy!" I managed to say, although my eyes were blinded with tears.

"I am glad, I am thankful that you bear it so well," said Mr. Benson. "I have never felt so anxious or so unhappy in my life as I have felt over this unfortunate business. But who would have thought that Paul would marry entirely for beauty, and then hide his wife in the Neigherry Hill?" I do not know what would have been the result of this match if Sir William had lived."

"You say Paul married her entirely for her beauty; surely he must have loved her?"

"Yes, there is no doubt he did," he replied. "Still there was a significant hesitation in his manner."

"You do not like her?" I said, divining, as I believed, his true thoughts. I put the question so suddenly that he had no time to think before he answered.

"No—indeed I do not," with an air of great relief. "But she will be here to-morrow, Miss Gordon. She would not come with me, but it was arranged that she should follow me."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE EDUCATION OF "PUSSY."

The Playful Companion of Two Unfortunates.

Prince Krapotkin's experiment with "Pussy," the companion of his captivity, has been repeated by M. Emile Gautier, his fellow prisoner, who during his detention at Clairvaux has studied very closely the intelligence of the cat. The result of his experiments are published in the *Revue Scientifique*. M. Gautier says: "It is literally true what Krapotkin says, that 'Pussy'—whose education, it should be mentioned, has been particularly careful—recognizes her image in a glass, distinguishes the different signs of the prison clock, plays hide-and-seek with the same seriousness and the same interest as little children, etc. It is also correct that she understands (at least she behaves as if she understood) the significance of a few words. I am even disposed to believe that she is not indifferent to Gounod's music. But these are not the most surprising features. Among those which Krapotkin has omitted to cite there is one which has always struck me more than all others, and which I now submit to you. I ought to tell you that nature has ornamented my head with a luxurious mass of hair. Krapotkin on the other hand, is extremely bald. This difference was used by our little companion for a singular intrigue. It has often happened when both played with her that she softly passed her paw over our respective heads as if to ascertain that her eyes did not deceive her. This inspection concluded and the visual notions confirmed by touch, her physiognomy took the air of comic surprise. The variety of sensations perplexed her, and she did not dissimulate the feeling. Nearly every evening the scene was gone through, to our great edification, as you may imagine. Another strange thing was her unaccountable fear of the warders. She had been born within the walls of the prison, and belonged to an old family of prison cats. Hereditary and the influence of the same surroundings ought to have overcome this antipathy. This, however, was not the case. No sooner did she spy the abhorred uniform at the end of the dormitory or cell than she fled with every sign of terror. Even if one held her at the moment it was prudent to let her go at once, otherwise she knew how to scratch. Nothing was of any use, neither smiles nor frowns. With us, on the contrary, she allowed herself all kinds of familiarities."

A Sermon Spoiled.

"What seems to be the matter?" he asked, mildly, as they were returning from church: "didn't you enjoy the sermon?"

"Enjoy the sermon?" she repeated, shortly, "and that odious Mrs. Smith sitting directly in front of me with a new fall wrap on that never cost a cent less than \$125. You must think I have a very warm religious temperament."

Loss of Flesh and Strength. with poor appetite, and perhaps slight cough in morning, or on first lying down at night, should be looked to in time. Persons afflicted with consumption are proverbially unconscious of their real state. Most cases commence with disordered liver, leading to bad digestion and imperfect assimilation of food—hence the emaciation, or wasting of the flesh. It is a form of scrofulous disease, and is curable by the use of that greatest of all blood-cleansing, anti-bilious and invigorating compounds, known as Dr. Pierce's "Golden Medical Discovery."

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