

# KERSHAM MANOR.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### LOVE'S DREAM.

It was a July evening. Dinner was over, and Nina La Touche had gone out into the garden to gather a rose. Mrs. La Touche had graciously permitted the irregularity. She did not usually approve of such deviations from established rules. But Sebastian was with her, and he would see that the dear child did not catch cold. So Mrs. La Touche was left alone in the drawing-room, poring placidly to herself over the uncut pages of a monthly review, and wondering how soon the wedding could take place. Now Sebastian had not yet proposed. But mothers see very far.

Nina was in a remote corner of the garden, where she could not be seen from the house. To a young man like Sebastian Malet, already tormented by the ardor of a first love, the moment was over-powering. He followed Nina closely, more and more eager to pour his love into her ears. Nina stepped lightly from bush to bush. "Here are the red roses," she said, "the deep velvety ones that I like so much. Where is your knife, Sebastian? Cut this one for me, please."

"Won't you give me my rose?" she said coquettishly. He had forgotten all about the rose. "Oh, Nina," he said, suddenly casting reserve to the winds, "don't you know how much I love you?" He took a step nearer and put his arms round her waist. "Darling, tell me that you love me too," he said.

"Yes," Nina whispered. "Say it, darling; say 'I love you, Sebastian.'" "I love you, Sebastian." "Sweetest!" He kissed her on the mouth.

"Oh, Sebastian! Ought we? What will mamma say?" "What do I care what anybody says? What is the whole wide world to me? You are my world; you are my queen, my sovereign lady, my guiding angel! I have loved you ever since I saw you. Oh, that first night after my return, my beautiful darling! Do you remember? You looked like a flower, a spirit, a white angel; you look so to-night. Oh, Nina, Nina! Did nobody ever tell you how beautiful you are?"

"Oh, Sebastian, how can you! Yes, yes, I do love you—darling, I do; only it is so strange and wonderful." "Did you know that you loved me Nina?" "Oh no. How could I?—At least—at least—"

"Dearest," pleaded Sebastian, "tell me that you loved me just a little. You could not love me now if you had not loved me as I loved you from the very beginning. I am sure you did! Darling, tell me!" "Not quite at first," responded Nina softly, "but afterwards—when you spoke to me—looked at me!"

"Yes, my own Nina! Then you understood? then you began to love me too?" "Yes Sebastian." "You have the loveliest hair in the whole world. And you are sure you love me, darling?" "I am quite, quite sure. You must have seen so many girls grander and prettier than I am that I can hardly believe that you care for me."

"Can't you?" said he tenderly, "Look at me." She raised her head and let him gaze deeply into her soft eyes. "She gave a joyous little laugh. 'I suppose I can,' she replied. 'Darling,' said the lover at last, 'if this would only last for ever! It shall last. No one ever loved as I do in all the world. Our love is for eternity.'"

Alas, how often—and how vainly—have such words been said!

## CHAPTER XVII.

### CONFIDENCES.

The Squire was well content with Sebastian's head-long plunge into love-making; but in all matters relative to "the boy" he was accustomed to let his brother Roland legislate. He had an immense respect for Roland's wisdom. And Sir Roland was not pleased with his nephew's choice. He had certainly wanted Sebastian to marry; but not to marry Nina La Touche, for whom he had the same sort of benevolent contempt that he felt for his Cousin Selina.

Sebastian wanted to marry directly. Mrs. La Touche quite approved of his design, and the Squire would not have opposed it, but here Sir Roland stood firm. He said that it would be pure folly for the two—mere boy and girl—to marry when they had scarcely known each other a month, for their childish companionship had been severed so long that it did not count; and so he insisted, not only on delay, but on separation.

Mrs. La Touche had never thought of such a thing as delay. She had received the news of Sebastian's proposal with effusion; but as soon as she gathered the gist of Sir Roland's objections she declared that she had always been of his opinion, and that he was wise—most wise—in putting a check upon that dear, ardent, but, she was afraid, most impetuous boy. Nina wept and bemoaned herself in vain.

Sebastian laughed. "My darling! Is she jealous?—No, I was only joking. Esther is not a girl that one flirts with; she is too serious. And we only talk of you. She is very fond of you, as of course she ought to be."

"Do you think her pretty?" asked Nina anxiously. "Some people might consider her handsome; she is a little too tragic for me," said Sebastian with a smile. "I admire fair women with golden hair and blue eyes, don't you?"

Sir Roland, looking in one afternoon for a cup of tea on the lawn with his cousin, saw them thus walking along a distant garden path. Nina's white fingers were interlaced on Sebastian's arm, her flower-like face was upturned, while he looked down at it with serious intentness. Sir Roland looked at them with regret.

"A pretty picture," he said to Mrs. La Touche. "Poor things," she said. "They look well matched, do they not? You could hardly find a handsomer couple in all the country.—Ah, Miss Denison, dear, I sent Cecily to find you. It is your last afternoon, is it not? before the holidays, and I was sure that you would like to say good-by to Mr. Malet before you went, as we shall not have him here for a year or more."

Her eyes rested coldly on Esther's face as she said these gracious words. She had her suspicions of Miss Denison. "Thank you," she said simply. "But it is a pity to disturb them, and I really ought to hasten home to my mother. Will you kindly say good-by for me, and convey my best wishes to Mr. Malet?"

"Sebastian would be sorry not to say good-by," said Sir Roland kindly. "One of the children will call him." "No, no, please not," said Esther hurriedly. "Indeed I must go. You will say good-by for me, please. I am not able to wait this afternoon."

"Very well," answered Mrs. La Touche. "I will tell him that you left him your farewells. Good-by, if you must go. My love to your dear mother." Inwardly she thought: "The girl is afraid of breaking down. I always thought there would be some complication of this kind. Nothing shows want of breeding more clearly than the betrayal of a loved-disappointment. I did not think that Miss Denison was so weak."

About nine o'clock that evening Esther sat in her little parlor at Kennet's Green. Mrs. Denison was upstairs. Esther had been alone for half an hour, and was leaning back in a low arm chair beside the open window, in utter languor and weariness of heart. Her heart gave a great leap of unreasoning fright and joy when suddenly the garden gate creaked on its hinges and Sebastian's tall figure with its usual easy swing came up the garden path.

"I have come to say good-bye. I was so sorry when I found that you had gone without seeing me," he said, grasping her hand in friendly fashion, and leading her back to her seat at the window. "I did not want to disturb you," Esther responded faintly. "So Mrs. La Touche said. You are always thoughtful for others, Esther. But you would not have disturbed us at all. I am glad I thought of coming up to-night. There is something that I wanted to say."

"Would you like a lamp?" she said instinctively withdrawing a little into the shade. "No, thank you. I like this half light—if you do. I wanted to speak to you for a moment—about Nina." "Yes?" "You are Nina's friend? You love Nina?"

"Yes," she answered steadily. "Will you be her friend while I am away, Esther? That is what I wanted to ask." "Is it necessary to ask?" Esther said in rather ironical surprise. "No—perhaps not." "When I am away, she will have many advisers, many admirers," he went on. "Her mother is not—not quite so ready to give her consent to the engagement as she was."

"Oh!" said Esther. "Sir Roland has been speaking to her. I believe that I shall not be so wealthy as Mrs. La Touche expected. I suppose that that is the reason. She does not forbid the engagement. I can not help seeing that if a richer suitor came by she would rather—perhaps it is uncharitable to say so."

"Oh no. You are right. Mrs. La Touche always likes rich people best." "You have noticed that?" said the young man with interest. "My uncle has often told me so, but I never believed it until—until—until to-night." "She has not been trying to break off the engagement?"

"No. It is where it was before—an understanding rather than an engagement. It is all the same to me, and to Nina too," said Sebastian; "we shall love each other forever, but when I am away I am afraid that Nina—Nina will not be happy; her mother may fret and worry her about her promise to me."

"But she loves you." "Oh, yes. She is the dearest—sweetest—It is dangerous to get me on that topic, as you know, Esther; it is really not fair to suggest it. I wanted to ask you just to be as kind and sympathetic as you always are, you know—and if—if she seems unhappy, or her mother is not kind to her, to let me know. I have brought you my address, and you could just send me a line."

"But what good would it do?" said Esther, taking from his hand the card on which a few words were penciled. "If Nina were unhappy, she would surely let you know. And if she did not wish you to know, why should I tell you?" "I would come home at once and marry her if she were unhappy."

"Against Sir Roland's wishes?" "Sir Roland is unreasonable." "It is the first time that you have found him so," said Esther. "Sebastian paused. 'Yes,' he said, 'that is true. It is the first time he has ever opposed anything on which I have set my heart. You think that I am not sufficiently conscious of the debt that I owe to my uncle?' he said anxiously.

"I did not say that." "No, but I see you think it. You were always a good counselor. Perhaps you are right. You will at any rate be Nina's friend?" he said pleadingly. "Always—always. To the last day of her life, if she will let me."

"Thank you. And mine too?" "Yes," she replied, with less apparent enthusiasm. "I am grateful to you," he said earnestly. "Good-by, Esther. I am going home to my uncle, and I will remember your words. Good-by. I start early to-morrow."

He pressed her hand warmly and was gone. "I will keep my word," she said to herself. "I will be Nina's friend, her best friend, as long as we live, if she will let me. She is quite likely to 'drop' me when she gets into a different kind of society, and then where will our friendship be?" Esther's lip curled at the thought.

A brisk knock at the door was followed by the entrance of Miss Meredith. "Was that Sebastian Malet?" said the lady. "I saw him from my garden, and I ran in to ask when he was going. To-morrow?" "Yes."

"And he and little Nina are not to be formally engaged? Well, I think it is a pity. Rather too bad of old Sir Roland." "Miss Meredith was angling for news. 'I ran in just as I was,' she explained cheerfully. 'I was retreating one or two carnations; and I must go back to 'em, for I've left them standing out on a bench, and they don't like a draught to their feet, poor dears. So you don't think Sir Roland is to blame? People are saying that he's rather heartless. But, law, we all do things that look heartless now and then. That's nothing. Whose card is that?' Miss Meredith cried briskly, laying hands on it before Esther could interpose. 'Sebastian's! Oh, with his foreign address, I see. Are you going to write to him then?'"

"About Nina—perhaps," said Esther. "Hm. Well, my dear, I don't want to lecture you—"

"No, please don't, dear Miss Meredith!" "But you must not let Mr. Sebastian flirt with you, as you know, young men are very apt to—"

"He never flirted with me in his life; he never thought of such a thing!" "I'm glad to hear it, dear, and you need not look so indignant, for I'm only speaking for your good. I don't think Sebastian is a flirting man. He would be more likely to take things seriously, and invent a grand passion for himself, as our neighbors say."

"Miss Meredith!" "Take my word for it, dear—and I've seen a good deal of men, though I am only a plain old spinster at the end of my days—there are men that think they can be in love with two women at once; but I assure you they can't."

"Who ever heard of such a thing!" exclaimed Esther. "They think so, indeed, my dear. But it always ends in a man choosing between the two women, taking one, or leaving both—generally the latter. The thing that's impossible is to keep the balance between them. One always wins in the long run. So don't you be deluded by Sebastian into a Platonic friendship, or anything of that sort; trying to make a trio out of what was set down as a duet. Better stick to the score."

"Your warnings are well meant but quite needless," Esther flashed out angrily. "I shall never write to Mr. Malet, and I shall probably not see him again for months or years."

She tore the card in two and threw it out of the window.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A PROMISE AND A SEARCH.

"Sir Roland seriously ill and wishes to see you."

Such was the telegram received by Sebastian some six months after his departure from Kersham Manor. He had heard that his uncle was failing in health and had been anxious on his account; but this telegram gave him a great shock.

The breach between the uncle and nephew, caused by Sir Roland's disapproval of his engagement to Nina, had been widened by Mrs. La Touche's report of a conversation that she had held with her cousin. She had spoken of Sebastian's prospects of his probable heirship of Kersham Manor and of Sir Roland's fortune, and she had been surprised to find her words cut short rather sharply.

"Sebastian will probably inherit the manor, as you say," he remarked. "Stephen always speaks of him as the heir. But Stephen is not bound to leave it to Sebastian. Indeed, he might marry again—who knows? No, it is not likely; I only say that it is possible. As for my own money, I have not very much to leave, after all; and I do not promise it all to him. I have other objects in view."

We shall soon see the effect of that speech if Selina is actuated only by worldly motives, he thought shrewdly. Sebastian took a high hand, and immediately declared that Sir Roland might leave his money where he would.

He telegraphed the hour of his arrival as soon as he landed in England; and the doctor met him at the Woodbury station. "Is he—is he—worse?" he faltered fearing to hear a more terrible word. "No worse at present. But I thought I should like to see you before you reached the house. Your carriage is here; if you will give me a seat in it, I will tell you all that we have to tell as we go along."

# OLD WORLD NEWS.

## SPECIAL CABLES.

### Startling Rumors in London—Afghan Frontier Matter Settled—French Spies in Germany.

A London special says:—"The city has been filled for several days with rumors of impending financial failures, but nothing definite can be ascertained. The Stock Exchange settlement has been concluded without default."

In its financial article to-day The Times says: "Alarming rumors prevailed in the city yesterday. Reports have been current for days affecting the management of the Bank of England; also concerning the losses of the bank supposed to have been incurred owing to certain irregularities. Irregularities have not been denied. The enquiry is proceeding, but enough is known to prove that the losses are much less than alleged by reckless scandal-mongers. The Times believes the rumors that certain directors of the bank are about to retire are without foundation in fact. The financial editor says in conclusion: 'There must be some fault in a system under which the irregularities in question occurred. The bank ought to make known at once the facts concerning the public.'"

## AFGHANISTAN AND INDIA.

### The Ameer Announces that the Frontier and Other Questions Are Settled.

A despatch from Calcutta says:—"The Ameer of Afghanistan announced at a military review on Sunday that the frontier question and other matters long pending settlement between Afghanistan and India, had been adjusted satisfactorily. The result, he said, was very agreeable to him, and he rejoiced in the restoration of his cordial relations to the Indian Government."

## THE FRENCH SPIES.

### Emperor William Commends the Officers Who Made the Arrest.

A Berlin despatch says:—"The Emperor has especially commended the officials who arrested the two French spies on the English yacht Insect, off Kiel. He will probably decorate them. The importance of the case against the Frenchmen has increased greatly in the last few days, since evidence was found to indicate that both were working for the French general staff. In official circles many believe that France will be obliged to make an apologetic explanation of the matter."

## A ROYAL WEDDING.

### The Bride is the Grand-Daughter of the Emperor of Austria.

A Munich special says:—"The marriage of Archduke Joseph Augustus of Austria and the Princess Augustin of Bavaria, grand-daughter of Emperor Francis Joseph, was solemnized here to-day with all the possible splendor of the court. Freiherr von Crailsheim, Minister of State for the Royal House, performed the civil service in the throne room of the Royal palace. Archbishop Thoma officiated at the religious ceremony in the court church of All Saints. He was assisted by several high Catholic prelates. Emperor Francis Joseph attended both ceremonies. The city is illuminated this evening, and bands are playing in the public square."

## A GREAT WEDDING.

### The Earl of Bathurst Linked to Miss Lillias Borthwick.

A London special says:—"The marriage took place to-day of Lillias, only daughter of Sir Algernon Borthwick, to the Earl of Bathurst. It was a great society affair, and was attended by a large number of aristocrats. The ceremony was performed at St. Paul's church, Knight's Bridge, Archdeacon Hayward, the vicar, officiating. The service was full choral."

The bride wore a white satin dress trimmed with chiffon and a tulle veil fastened with a pearl and diamond brooch. She carried a bouquet of lilies of the valley and stephanotis. There were eight bridesmaids, who wore white silk dresses trimmed with pale blue velvet and mink. They carried bouquets of carnations. Among the many presents were the following: From the Queen, a silver tea service; from the Duke and Duchess of York, a heart-shaped casket encrusted with jewels; from Ex-Empress Eugenie, a gold plated tea service; from Lady Rothschild, a ruby and diamond bracelet; from Lord Randolph, and Lady Randolph Churchill, a silver tankard, and from Sir William Vernon Harcourt, Chancellor of the Exchequer, six jewelled bangles.

## MANITOBA'S WHEAT CROP.

### About Eight Million Bushels Already Shipped From the Country This Year.

A Winnipeg, Man., special says:—"It is reported that all the wheat in Minnesota and the Dakotas of this season's crop, available for export, has already been marketed and forwarded to seaboard," said a reporter to a Canadian Pacific Railway official to-day.

"It is very much the same in Manitoba," replied the official. "By the end of this month, when navigation will probably close, we expect to have eight million bushels of this year's crop out of the country. Up to date we have taken out about six and a half million bushels, and during the next fortnight, providing deliveries by the farmers continue as they have been, we will have carried out another one and a half million bushels. Estimating the crop at fifteen million bushels, which will likely be near the correct figure, this will leave only four million bushels still to be marketed."

Barley-water and linseed-tea will improve the voice.

Fumigation by tobacco smoke will destroy insects on plants.

The Paris sewers are the largest and most complete in the world.

A German scientist maintains that diamonds originally came from meteors.

There are said to be 673,642 Freemasons and 647,471 Oddfellows in America.

The best edible frogs dressed for table at Paris come from Alsace, packed in large baskets.