

# The Lady Brandolin ;

OR, THE LOST PATRIMONY.

## CHAPTER VIII.—(Cont'd)

"Certainly," replied I, and detailed to him the occurrences of my first night at Hickory Hall. To my surprise he looked infinitely relieved, though the laugh was unnatural with which he said,

"You cannot believe it possible that the turtle soup and deviled partridges gave you a horrible nightmare, can you?"

"No, truly, I cannot. What I saw was real."

"Fairfield, when next you visit Hickory Hall, look into the library, and on the third shelf in the second arch on the right hand of the chimney-piece, you will find Sir Walter Scott's complete works. Select from among them his volume on Demonology, and read it with attention. I think it will do you good," said he, with a calm, deliberate manner.

"What I was about to say to you, Wolfgang, was this: I felt it to be my duty to my sister to inform her of all I know of your history, as well as to hint to her all I suspect!" And I looked, expecting him to explode. He was quiet as a bombshell untouched.

"Ah! you told her?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Well, Wallraven, I implored her, as she valued her happiness, not to risk it by marrying you. I used every argument and entreaty in my power to enforce or persuade her to break with you—"

"And the result—"

"Was utterly unsuccessful."

"No more than that?"

"Yes; much more! I was totally defeated, routed, blasted by the lightning of her angry scorn, and I wonder that a bit of me is left to tell the tale!"

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! I knew it!"

"I said everything I could say to your injury, Wolfgang, and, having done so, I come to tell you of it—not in defence, but in frankness."

"God bless you, Fairfield! there! I believe that is the first time in all my life, at least since my angel mother went to heaven, that I have prayed! but happy love makes one grateful and devout. God bless you, Fairfield, for you were true to your sister, to my bride! my idolized Regina! You were right to tell her all you know, which was—nothing; and all you suspect, which was—something less! But, Fairfield, my dear fellow, having made up my own mind to marry her, it is quite settled! Let your conscience rest, for you cannot help it! What is your eloquence to me, when I love her? What is the power of all men and devils over her, compared to mine, when she loves me? It is settled. All earth and hell could not part us now! It is settled. I wrote to my father this noon. I shall take my wife to Paris immediately after our marriage. I intend to make our home there for many, many years—perhaps forever! France is really the only civilized country in this barbarous world! Paris, only, is really enlightened! or, beginning to be. Yes! Paris shall be our home. Go with us, Fairfield, will you not?"

"No! to that modern Sodom I will never go. You, Wallraven, if I know you, will never like a place where the sanctity of home and hearth is unknown! You will be only, at best, a refugee in Paris—from what I suppose—nay, I hope—I may never know."

"Yes, you will know, some day, when I can tell you my humiliating secret proudly! Then you shall know!"

"God grant that you may be able to do so. Wolfgang, my brother!"

Regina at this moment entered the room, every sign of displeasure vanished from her radiant brow.

I made no further opposition. I crushed down in the bottom of my heart my foreboding fears, and tried to hope. Now that it was useless to look on the dark side, I turned resolutely to the bright one, which was really very bright. Wolfgang—young, handsome, talented, accomplished and wealthy—the distinguished graduate of the University now radiant with the glory of his recent collegiate honors, adoring my sister and adored by her.

Yes! I would look only on this side of the picture, where all was brilliant!

The next day we received a visit from Bishop L—, under whose care Regina had traveled North. He condoled with us upon our misfortune when he came, but congratulated us upon our firmness and gaiety when he went away.

I promised to return his call; and accordingly upon the second day I did so, and took that opportunity of informing him of my sister's contemplated marriage with Wolfgang Wallraven, and of unfolding to him my desire to enter a course of theological reading for the purpose of taking holy orders. I told him how long this had been in my mind, how long, even before I dreamed of a possible loss of fortune.

He highly approved my design, and placed his library at my service, inviting me at the same time to return with him to the South, and take up my abode for the present at his house.

There were many reasons why I should feel no scruple in accepting the assistance of the venerable old man. He had in his youth been indebted to my grandfather for his own education, and subsequent establishment in the Church in which he had risen to such high honor. Now, in his age, he had wealth, a large house, an extensive library, and but a small family, consisting of his wife, one son and a daughter. He seemed very anxious to assist me, and soon overruled my faint objections.

I told him, however, that it would be impossible for me to return with him, or go South at all, until after my sister's marriage, when I promised to do so.

When I returned, I found that Wallraven and Regina had walked out together. They did not return until the dinner hour.

I pass over two weeks, the mornings of which were spent in walking, or riding out, or reading, music or conversation at home; and the evenings, in attending lectures and concerts abroad, or in some social pastime in our own parlor.

Regina was proudly, though bashfully joyous.

Wallraven exhibited a haughty and happy self-consciousness, that became him greatly. Every day his step was more stately and elastic, his eye more steady and commanding. The regnant spirit was assuredly triumphant now!

At the end of two weeks, early one morning, he entered my chamber and laid before me two papers, indicating the one that I should read first.

That was a letter from his father, Mr. Wallraven, giving consent to his marriage, and filled with affectionate expressions of regard for his bride and earnest prayers for the happiness of both, regretting that his infirmities must prevent his traveling North to be present at their marriage, and pressing Wolfgang to bring his wife to Hickory Hall immediately after the ceremony. His letter ended with a message of affection and esteem for myself, a fervent tender of service, and an invitation to accompany my sister and her husband to Virginia. The letter was like the old gentleman himself, full of delicate beneficence, exalted love and magnanimity, yet through all betraying an undertone of sadness, solemnity, almost gloom. I was deeply affected on reading it.

Wolfgang slipped it from my hand and placed the other paper before me.

This was the attested copy of a deed settling one hundred thousand dollars on Regina Fairfield. I read this twice, or thrice, before I looked up to see Wallraven leaning over my chair with an expression of generous satisfaction.

"Why, what is the meaning of this, Wallraven?" inquired I, with the feeling and the tone of embarrassment.

"It means to express my own and my father's deep sense of the high honor Miss Fairfield confers upon us in bestowing her hand on me!" he replied, in a sad, earnest, and somewhat bitter tone.

"But this is wrong, utterly wrong, Wallraven. Regina's whole fortune now does not amount to

more than three thousand dollars—a sum scarcely sufficient to provide the trousseau of a Wallraven bride. If you will have her, in the name of heaven take her; but do not think of giving so much where nothing is given in return."

"She gives me her priceless self," he answered, almost mournfully; then, after a short pause, added, "I am glad that it is so. I am glad that she is dowryless. I would confer everything upon my bride; receive nothing from her but her love and still be her debtor, and still tremble for—oh, God!" he ejaculated, abruptly pausing.

"Regina herself, for the reason that she brings you no property, will object to receiving this magnificent settlement."

"She must not! It is the time-honored custom of our family. It has always been the rule of the Wallravens to settle that dowry upon the lady whom their heir should select as a bride, and who should respond to his love. Her fastidiousness must make her no exception to this rule. Indeed, her refined delicacy and pure, high pride, will prevent her seeing the matter as you do. She will not for a moment degrade her sentiments by mixing them up with these subjects!"

It was thus that the wayward and erring, but generous fellow ever defied even the greatest faults of his betrothed. I felt, when he spoke, that, with all his eccentricities, he was so much better than Regina as to be utterly blind to one thing which was quite apparent to me: namely, that as some diseases infect the whole physical system, so pride pervaded the whole mental and moral being of Regina Fairfield. Pride was the life of her love for Wallraven. Had not Wolfgang Wallraven been the eldest son and heir of an ancient and immensely wealthy Virginia family, living in her own old ancestral neighborhood—had he not been singularly handsome in person, graceful and dignified in manners, brilliant and profound in conversation, and endowed with genius that gave promise of an illustrious career—he never could have made so deep an impression upon Regina Fairfield's imagination and heart.

While seeing this, I saw in every glance, tone, and gesture of Wolfgang, that he must have worshipped her under any circumstances. How passionately fond of her he was! How entirely devoted to her service! How patient—he, the wilful, haughty, sarcastic Wolfgang—how patient of her arrogance, her cold exactions! It always seemed to me that my beloved Regina walked in the moral illusion in which she had been brought up, as if the world had been created for her use and the people for her service. She accepted the most arduous and unremitting, and even the magnificent marriage settlement, with such real and sovereign nonchalance, as such a mere matter of course, deserving neither acknowledgment, gratitude, nor remembrance. And this regal indifference, which would have grieved me deeply, had I been in Wallraven's place, never affected him in the least.

## CHAPTER IX.

Their marriage day was at length fixed for the next Thursday fortnight. Bishop L— was to perform the ceremony, immediately after which we were to set out for Hickory Hall.

Wallraven had intended to go immediately to Paris, but Regina had expressed her will that they should, according to the wish of the old gentleman and the time-honored custom of Virginia, spend the honeymoon in retirement, at the patrimonial house of the bridegroom, Hickory Hall.

Wallraven hesitated, looked disturbed, made—I know not what sort of excuse for opposing this plan.

Regina good-humoredly persisted in her purpose.

Wallraven expostulated seriously. Regina was charmingly immovable.

For the first time in their lives, Wallraven decidedly vetoed her will, and gave it his final determination, for reasons of the utmost moment, to proceed to Paris. Wolfgang gave this decision in a firm, grave, though affectionate tone; but Regina became extremely offended. Finally—

Wallraven bowed his will to hers, and retired to his chamber with a gloomy brow, to write and accept his father's invitation, and prepare them to receive us.

Wolfgang remained in his room all the forenoon; and so, when I wished to speak to him—thinking that he had surely long finished his letter—I went to his door, and, according to our usual familiar and

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unceremonious habit with each other, without rapping, entered his room.

He was so closely engaged in writing—so absorbed, in fact—that he did not perceive my entrance until I had approached the side of his chair, and had involuntarily seen that he had reached the fifth page of a foolscap letter.

I spoke to him. He started, thrust the letter into his writing-desk, and turned around. He looked paler, more gloomy, than I had seen him look for six months, or more.

He told me that, in consequence of the change of plan by which we were to go to Hickory Hall, instead of abroad, he had written, among other things, for his sister Constantia to come on and be present at his marriage, inquiring of me, with much interest, how I supposed Miss Fairfield would like Constantia.

I told him what I thought, namely—that Regina could not fail to admire and love Miss Wallraven.

He seemed pleased, and then I reminded him of an engagement he had made to ride with me that afternoon. He smiled mournfully—said that it had escaped his memory, but that he would soon be ready.

From this time it was evident that Wallraven's cheerfulness was gone. He had apparently purchased peace with his bride at a very dear and dangerous rate. His gloom deepened day by day, or was varied only by fitful flashes of false gaiety, or spasms of sharp anxiety. These evil symptoms, however, were never betrayed except in the absence of Regina. In her presence he would always resolutely command himself, and act a gay tranquility which was far from his real state of feeling. I do not know whether Regina penetrated his mask or not. If so, she never permitted me to see that she did.

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She was certainly very much pleased with the prospect of going to Hickory Hall, and of having Constantia Wallraven for a bridesmaid and a travelling companion. Smiling, she said to me one day.

"Do you know, Ferdinand, what makes me so wicked about this matter of going to Hickory Hall? It is to see that fine old Virginia gentleman, whom I shall love as a father, and whose love I wish to win. I cannot bear the idea of going to France without even setting eyes upon him whom I love to regard as a second father. I do not care if the old Hall is tumbling down! There is a certain prestige of old respectability about that dilapidated building, which does not always surround a smart-looking new tenement, however large and costly."

Then turning to Wallraven, she said.

"Such an absurd mistake of your highness, my Prince of Darkness! that of supposing that I should be shocked at the worn appearance of the old house!"

The day previous to her wedding-day she came into my room, smiling and sinking softly in a chair at my side, she said.

"Oh! Ferdinand, I am so well pleased, Wolfgang has a letter from his father, and now it is certain that Miss Wallraven will be with us this evening, and attended by—whom do you suppose? her twin brother, Constant, Wolfgang's younger brother! You never told me of him!"

"I knew nothing about him! What a queer, silent fellow your parti is, Regina! I wonder how many other brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins are to turn up."

"Oh, none! This Constant, who is a year younger than Wolfgang, has been for twelve months travelling in Europe, and has recently returned."

"Ah! and they come this evening?"

(To be continued.)

The winter care of sheep up to the time the lambs come, consists of two things—shelter and feeding. A flock will go through a winter sheltered by an open shed, but no flock ever came out of a winter in thrifty condition without judicious feeding.