

For Weal or for Woe;

Or, A Dark Temptation

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Evelyn sprung from the sofa and stood before him with clasped hands and burning eyes, her face as marble white as it would ever be in her coffin.

"Am I mad or—dr dreaming, Percy? Are my senses playing me false, or are you telling me you have learned to love some one else?" she gasped, hoarsely.

"It is so, Evelyn," he admitted, frankly. "You will never know how I struggled against that love with all my heart and soul, for I knew I was pledged to you; yet I was powerless to thrust from my heart the new love that had crept into it. Pray forgive me for causing you one heart- pang, yet I must tell you—I love another as dearly as you love me."

"Yet all this time, as my betrothed lover, I have trusted and believed in you—worshiped you as the very soul of honor," cried Evelyn, with the harshest laugh that ever fell from human lips—a laugh that made her blood run cold in his veins as he heard it.

A distressed look broke over his handsome face.

"I have been more honorable than some men would have been in such a case," he answered.

She sunk down on the velvet hassock at his feet, forgetting, all in a moment, the haughty St. Claire pride, thinking only of her mighty love, and that he had come to her, asking to be released from the promises which bound him to her.

"You must put this new love out of your heart," she cried; "thrust her out of your thoughts—learn to forget her."

"My dear Evelyn," he answered huskily, "if I could but persuade you to believe that my heart is irrevocably lost—it is too late. Be reasonable, Evelyn! Who is the girl to whom you have given the heart that is pledged to me?" she cried shrilly. "Tell me who she is, where you met her, and how you came to love her—keep nothing back. I must know all."

He looked at her with grave wonder, flushing a little under the scathing light of her blue eyes.

"It is certainly your right to know all, Evelyn," he said with gentle dignity, continuing slowly, "the young girl to whom my heart has gone out is the little creature whom I rescued from death in Central Park a little more than a fortnight ago."

Evelyn St. Claire recoiled with a terrible cry; her blonde face grew livid in spots; she tried to speak, but her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth; the world seemed to reel and grow dark around her—all the horrors of a lifetime was crowded into that moment.

"Repeat it, Percy!" she cried shrilly. "I cannot believe that I have heard aright. Ah, no, fate could never play me so horrible a trick as that!"

"It is quite true, Evelyn," he repeated; "that incident in the park seems to have changed the current of my whole life. As I caught the slender girlish figure in my arms from under the plunging hoofs of her maddened horse, I felt a strange sensation in my heart, a longing to hold her there through life. I could not see her face, for it was heavily veiled, yet I knew that it must be fair as an angel's. She spoke to me, and my heart thrilled with every word she uttered."

"Go on, go on!" cried Evelyn, "tell me all!"

And there was something in her voice that compelled him to proceed.

"You remember Little Gay," he said huskily, "who left the village so suddenly and mysteriously, and whose sudden death caused such widespread sorrow. I never told you of it before, Evelyn, but I will tell you now. I loved Little Gay with all the passionate depths of my nature; she was more to me than the world knew. My heart went out to this young girl whom I met in the park because she was so like my beautiful love whom chill death had torn from me. Heaven forgive me, I cannot tell you how I love her best, my dear Gay or my living love."

A great change had come over Evelyn St. Claire's pallid face, but he went on unheeding:

"She gave me her address—you remember I wrote you all about it at the time, Evelyn—Miss Remington, No. — Gramercy Park, —"

"I could not rest night or day until I called there. I had written the young lady that I would be there, yet I did not find her at home. I was shown into the library, and was brought face to face with a portrait of Miss Remington, the banker's adopted daughter."

"Evelyn! for one moment I stood dazed, speechless. If it had not been for the golden hair that curled over the lovely white brow, I could have sworn that the original was my Little Gay, who was lying in her grave."

"I left the house a few moments after, but the face that smiled up at me from that canvas has haunted me ever since."

"I have struggled against the sweet temptation of thinking of her all in vain. I did not go to the house again. I made no attempt to see or communicate with her in any way. Now you know my story, Evelyn. She is the only girl whom I can ever love. If I cannot win her, it is my solemn wish to go unmarried to the grave. I would love you if I could, Evelyn, but, alas! I cannot. The heart goes where God wills it."

Again the mighty force of her pent-up love swept down the barriers of maidenly reserve and the St. Claire pride.

"You will love me in time, Percy," she cried huskily. "She could never love you as deeply as I do. Think what it is you ask when you wish me to give you up to another. I—I—could almost die for you, I love you so!"

He could not help feeling touched—so much love lavished upon him in vain. He felt sorry and grieved for Evelyn, for her humiliation and her distress.

He had not dreamed she would take it so hard.

"Love like mine knows no reason," she panted hoarsely. "I ask you, Will you give her up and try to love me?"

"It would be a fruitless task," he answered sadly.

"Will you never care for me?" she cried, springing to her feet again, asking the question in a low, intense, breathless tone that might have warned him of coming danger.

"I can give you only the truest and warmest friendship, I cannot deceive you, or build your heart up on a false, delusive hope. I can never love you, my poor Evelyn."

He never forgot the face she turned toward him; it was distorted into a fiend's. In her passion she tore his betrothal ring from her finger and stamped it beneath her foot, crying out that that was the way he had stamped upon her heart.

"Evelyn!" he cried, in alarm, "in Heaven's name calm yourself. You distress me more than I can tell you."

For answer she picked up the flashing diamond and fung it into his face.

"There is such a thing as love turning to hate in a single instant," she cried. "Your love would have made me an angel—taking it from me has made a fiend incarnate of me—but I shall take such a revenge upon you that you shall have cause to remember the name of Evelyn St. Claire—whom you have so bitterly wronged to the last day of your life."

"I hate you now, even as I hated her as I have loved you," she cried wildly. "I will torture your proud heart as you have tortured mine to-night with pain, and your misery will be sweet to me."

"Evelyn!" he cried again, attempting to take her hand—but she snatched it from him, facing him with glittering eyes that

fairly burned their way down to his very soul.

This was a side of her nature he had never dreamed of. He looked at her in wonder and alarm.

"Now, in the hour in which you have broken my heart, listen to my revenge for it," she went on recklessly. "You shall never woo and win the love of your heart. Do you hear me, Percy Granville? I have parted you from her—not once—but a second time."

He looked at her in astonishment, quite believing she had taken the matter so deeply to heart that it had turned her brain.

"Listen and I will tell you the truth," she went on mockingly. "You held the girl in your arms in the park—you looked upon her pictured face in the Remington drawing-room, yet no instant warned you who the adopted daughter of the banker really was."

"You think I am going mad," she added scornfully, "but you will see a method in my madness that will quite shock you, I fancy. One philosopher tells us 'be keen eyes and instinctive ears,' another tells us 'love is blind,' you have proven the latter quite true. You were blind—you did not discover that Gaynell Esterbrook, your lost love, and the banker's adopted daughter were one and the same. Hear me out," she cried. "True love always finds its mate; yet even death will not separate the hearts which drew you irresistibly toward the girl, you failed to recognize her."

"Evelyn you must be mad," he said quietly, "quite mad, my poor girl, to have such hallucinations. Little Gay is in her grave."

His soothing tone exasperated her. "So you have been duped into believing," she cried triumphantly. "I tell you Little Gay is alive; she and the banker's daughter are one and the same."

There was such an irresistible ring of truth in her voice, that she even drew which he was compelled to listen in horror and dismay carried conviction to his heart.

He was so shocked, he could only stand there and listen while she briefly outlined a sketch of Gay's past. How Tremaine had, in truth, abducted her, of how she came from the fatal day in the disguise of a rich man for life, how she had been ill at Leighton Hall which caused the great change in her hair which so disguised her appearance; how she had written to him, and she herself had answered the girl's letter, declaring if they ever met again it must be as strangers.

"Evelyn! Percy! I dare not believe you. My Little Gay alive! oh, no, no, I cannot—I dare not credit such a story—you stagger me—amaze me."

"A moment more and my vengeance will be complete," she answered shrilly. "You saw the girl at the masked ball dressed as the fairies, and your own heart was attracted toward her, but you did not know her. She recognized you, but the words of the letter she believed had come from your hand kept her silent—she believed you loved me and had forgotten her."

He bounded to his feet with a terrible cry:

"Hold! hear me out," she cried: "In a moment more she had explained how Gay happened to be adopted by the great banker. And she added to her story the pitiful lie that it was Gay who had bribed the keeper of the village to publish to the world the story of her death, when on passing through it she had held a poor girl lying there with a face fatally like her own."

Percy sprung to the door with a bound; but Evelyn St. Claire caught his arm in a steel-like clasp.

"Evelyn, do not hold me back," he cried hoarsely; "your words have driven me mad with joy. My Little Gay—alive—how shall I believe that such delight is in store for me? I must fly to her—"

"Stop!" commanded Evelyn St. Claire. "Listen to the end of my story. I have told you the truth, that it may torture you—I have saved this, as the last and sweetest morsel of my revenge; you are not to clasp my hated rival to your throbbing heart, giving her the love and kisses that I am thirsting for with a starved, yearning heart. Fly to the banker's home as quick as you can, and there you will learn that your charming Gay mysteriously disappeared from their roof over a fortnight ago."

"Search the world through—wear your heart out in a torment of agony and suspense; but you will never find her. You shall never know the true fate (and death itself would be sweeter in comparison) which has overtaken Little Gay."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A horrible cry broke from Percy's lips—awful to hear in its intense anguish—the veins stood out on his forehead like whipcords, and the perspiration rolled down his face in great heavy beads.

"Evelyn!" he cried, in a stern, hoarse voice. "Your words are terrible; I cannot believe that you have conspired so cruelly to separate me from my love. If I thought so, I—"

She faced him defiantly, her beautiful face white as death, her steel-blue eyes blazing.

"You have wrecked my life, and I have paid you back pang for pang," she said slowly. "Every word I have told you is true. If I cannot have your love, my hated rival never shall. Take what revenge you will; it will not lessen what I have done; it will not restore your love to you."

The enraged beauty swept from the room with a mocking laugh, leaving Percy alone to face the awful shock her startling revelation had given him.

An hour later Percy was whirling as rapidly as steam could take him toward the city.

Men, women and children looked curiously at the handsome, haggard face of their fellow passenger, who paced restlessly up and down the length of the car in a fever of excitement words are weak to describe.

Various persons spoke to him; he neither heard nor saw them.

They were nothing to him—the whole world was nothing to him—his thoughts were concentrated upon one subject; ere the day dawned he would know whether his darling Little Gay was living or dead; whether she and the banker's adopted daughter were one and the same—or not.

The train seemed to creep along between the moonlit hills and over the babbling streams to the impatient man whose heart was on fire with the keenest anxiety.

Although the hour was late when he reached the city, he drove at once to the banker's home, at Gramercy Park—sprung from the cab, fairly leaped up the marble steps, giving the bell a quick, imperative peal.

Two gentlemen stood in the vestibule in earnest conversation, one of whom opened the door at once, and Percy found himself standing face to face with Mr. Remington, the banker, and Mr. Lennox, the detective.

Percy's great delight at finding the detective, upon whom he had been intending to call as soon as he left the banker's home, standing before him, knew no bounds.

He never remembered in what words he told them his thrilling story, begging the banker to tell him at once if his lost bride, his Little Gay, still lived, and was known to his adopted daughter.

Mr. Remington, with deep agitation, assured him that he believed it was quite true; Little Gay had indeed come from Passaic, where she had at one time been employed in the cotton mill, and the name

"SALADA"

A RICH, FRAGRANT TEA

Ceylon's Choicest Leaf and Bud; the Finest the World Produces.

SEALED PACKETS ONLY.

Black, Green and Mixed.

she had renounced to take his own was Gaynell Esterbrook. It was news to him, however, great news, that Little Gay was Percy Granville's bride.

The pathetic story of how they had been separated at the very altar, and the cruel plot of Evelyn St. Claire to thrust them asunder, which had been carried out with such fiendish success, seemed more like a romance than a painful reality.

Percy raved around the room like one distracted when he found that the darling little bride who had been so miraculously restored to him from the dead, as it seemed, had in truth, as Evelyn St. Claire had asserted, mysteriously disappeared a fortnight previous.

He refused to be comforted; his poignant grief was terrible.

Then it all came out how the banker and his wife had gone to Passaic to bring Gay home, believing, from the note they had received, she had gone with Evelyn St. Claire to visit her, and their dismay upon learning the heiress had not seen her and knew nothing of her whereabouts.

Immediately upon reaching the city the banker had sought the services of Mr. Lennox, the famous detective, and unfolded to him his story, begging him to trace the whereabouts of his adopted daughter, Little Gay, and he should be a rich man for life.

For the first time in his life the great detective betrayed the most intense excitement as he listened; for, as the narrator proceeded, he had made the thrilling discovery that Little Gay, the banker's adopted daughter, and the bride Percy Granville mourned as dead were one and the same, though he kept his own counsel, breathing never a word of the startling denouement.

The detective remembered the beautiful blonde whom he had first met in the newspaper office, and whom he had followed to the drug-store in the disguise of a ragged old man, begging work in the shape of show-cases to clean.

He had watched her quite unnoticed while she jangled the impressive young clerk into letting her have the subtle drug, and had followed her from the drug-store to the fashionable Remington mansion at Gramercy Park, where the strange adventure dropped; but now, as he listened to a description of the young lady friend who had left for the matinee with Gay on that fatal day, he realized that Gay's friend was the tall, beautiful blonde whom he had followed from the drug-store, with the deadly poison in her possession.

He quite believed that this girl was at the bottom of the whole affair. He went at the case after his own peculiar fashion.

It did not startle the beautiful blonde in her fancied security. He felt convinced that Gay had been decoyed to some place in the city and had been cleverly entrapped.

When he read of the approaching marriage of Percy Granville and this Miss St. Claire, the whole case was as plain as day to his keen, experienced eye. He intended to stop the ceremony at all hazards, but in the interim he had instituted a vigorous search for the missing girl; but it seemed as if all the evil powers were arrayed against him; for the first time in his life he failed to obtain the slightest clew. And at this stage of affairs Percy Granville had come upon the scene.

The case had been carried on with the utmost secrecy—not even the faintest rumor of Miss Remington's mysterious disappearance leaked out.

Experienced men were detailed to work

up the case; every nook and cranny of the great metropolis, with its hidden crimes, was carefully explored—all in vain. If the earth had opened and swallowed little Gay, she could not have been more completely lost to the world.

Percy's grief was terrible to behold. To have his lost darling restored to him was indeed heart-rending. The poor fellow haunted the detective's private office like a shadow, begging them to inform him when they obtained the slightest clew.

"Oh, Gay, my love, if you had but come to me when Hazel died, how much misery might have been spared us both!"

How much blinder his eyes and brain had been than his heart at that masked ball at Leighton Hall. How true his heart had been when it claimed Gay for its own, despite the disguise that shrouded her identity, and it had been quite the same when fate cast her so strangely in his arms that day in the park. He remembered how tightly his arms had closed about her, and how the yearning longing that possessed him to press his lips to the sweet, tremulous mouth the heavy veil but half revealed, almost overpowered him.

And to think that it was his own lost Gay!

He wondered that his heart had not broken when he had gazed, as he believed, on her sweet face in the coffin—the lovely face of his lost bride—that had held all the sunshine of his life.

He had been weeping his very heart out over her lonely grave, over which he had placed a marble shaft, which told the world that she was his. Yet all this time Gay had been alive; and, bitterest of all bitter thoughts, she had believed that he had ceased to love her; believing, too, that it was his wish, if they ever met again, that it would be—as strangers.

He could scarcely refrain from cursing Evelyn St. Claire for the hand she had had in it, although he knew that it had been her great love for himself that had tempted her so desperately and fatally.

(To be continued.)

Won't Stand For That.

Mrs. Fitzwell (socially inclined)—My dear, I have picked out a husband for you.

Her daughter—Very well; but I tell you emphatically that when it comes to buying the wedding dress, I'll select the material myself.

Shiloh

"The Family Friend for 40 years." A never failing relief for Croup and Whooping Cough.

Never trouble trouble till trouble brings suit.

2 IN 1

SHOE POLISH

Gives a Quick, Brilliant Polish That Lasts

Easier to Use Better for the Shoes

No Turpentine

Sweet Cream Wanted

WE are now contracting for our Summer Supply of Sweet Cream. If you have a good supply of ice, good stables, milkhouse, etc., and can ship 24 gallons of 32% cream a week, write us. WE buy on the butter fat basis and pay on the 10th of each month. --- WE can take your total output for 12 months of the year.

City Dairy Co., Limited, Toronto

Concrete is the cheapest building material

Canada Cement

which Canadian farmers use, with their own sand, stone and gravel to make concrete, is the only ingredient you have to buy.

We have, by reason of our large output and scientific methods, been able to bring the price of "Canada" Cement so low that it is within the reach of everyone.

An increase in demand results in a greater economy of production, and when conditions have warranted it, we have, from time to time, shared this saving with the consumer by reducing the price of Canada Cement. This demand will continue to increase—as fast as farmers learn of concrete's superiority over other materials.

When you buy cement, see that you get "Canada" Cement; by so doing you will assure the complete success of all your concrete work.

Send a post card for our book "What the Farmer Can do With Concrete." It is free.

There is a Canada Cement dealer in your neighborhood.

Canada Cement Company Limited

If this label is not on every bag it is not Canada Cement.



Montreal