

Her Great Love;

Or, A Struggle For a Heart

CHAPTER XIV.—(Cont'd.)

He had been changing unconsciously; had not known, realized, what it was that was working the transformation.

But he knew now. And he sat with his head bent and his eyes covered, and faced the thing. For Gaunt, though not a good man, was no fool and no coward. He had not to face it.

He placed the whole case before him, so to speak, and tried to regard it calmly and judicially.

He was in love with Decima Doane. He, years older than she—and a married man!

He wiped the sweat from his face with an unsteady hand. It seemed ridiculous and absurd; but there it was, and all the ridicule he could pour on it would not quench or down the truth. He tried to laugh as he thought of the difference in age, of the bond that held and galled him; but the laugh rang hollow and unsatisfactory.

He loved her. And he knew it was the first real love of his life. The fancy for the woman who bore his name had been a fancy only, and had died; changed, rather, to contempt and loathing. He had never really loved until he had met Decima. And the girl was everything in the world to him. Life, hope, joy.

Her face rose before him as he sat and thought. The sweet, girlish face with its blue and ever-changing eyes, its mobile mouth and its bright and innocent smile, the soft brown hair clustering in tendrils on her white brow. Her voice with its innocent tone.

Innocent! Yes, she was innocent; so child-like, that she did not guess how it was with him. He was not a good man; but he thanked God that she did not know that she must never know.

He must go away, go away at once. He rose, stung to movement by the resolve, and almost groaned. A shudder ran through him as he thought of returning to the world, of going away from the sight of her face, the sound of her voice. They were life to him, and his days without them would be shadowed by the darkness of a death in life.

Need he go? She did not know, guess, of his love for her. He would keep a close watch and guard over every look and word. Who should not have the consolation of being near her? She had been like a guardian angel to him; she had, all innocently and unconsciously, led him out of the dark forest of despair and gloom to higher and brighter lands. She had been his saving angel. If he left her he would sell that old life—the old life he hated and loathed.

As he paced up and down with bent head and hands tightly clinched, he tried to persuade himself that he should be content, to be near her, to see her occasionally; that he should be content with nothing more. Yes, that was how he would work it. She should be just an angel of light to him. He would go on loving her, but as the sailor loves the beacon star that lights him home through the storm; as the light that burns in the shrine of a saint. Inspired by that love, he would keep his life clean and sweet; he would devote it to her. He would be her slave, would do everything she wanted done for the place and the people.

Yes, that was how it must be, he said, with a deep breath. There, he hoped for me. The child would never love me, even—even if I were only her age and free. Very good. Let me accept that, let me remember it always, when I am with her or away from her. She is not for me. She can never be mine, but I can go on loving her. I will never let her suspect; I will keep a close guard on my secret, and she shall never know. It would only pain her, and, God knows, I would rather die a thousand deaths than she should suffer a moment's pain.

He laughed disconsolately.

"What a pity one can not die when one likes," he said bitterly. "It would be so easy a way out of it. But I've got to live—and I can not live without her!"

The last words were uttered so savagely. We all know how, at some time or other, we stand at bay with Fate and fight him tooth and nail. Gaunt was fighting Fate for all he knew.

The dinner-bell rang, and he went and dressed. Hobson looked at the haggard face anxiously and wondered what was amiss. He knew nothing of the great mistake, but he suspected the existence of some hidden sorrow in his master's life, and he wondered whether it had cropped up again, for he had noticed the change of late for the better in Lord Gaunt's manner and appearance.

Gaunt went down to the elaborate dinner, but he could not eat, and presently he rose and went out into the air.

There was a faint moonlight, a night-ingale was singing on one of the trees on the lawn. He saw Decima's face in the soft light, he heard her voice speaking through the birds. Presently he got his hat, and, half-mechanically, went up the avenue and along the road to The Woodbines.

As he reached the house and stood in the shadow of the trees on either side of the road, he heard the piano, and then her voice—the clear, sweet, girlish voice which echoed in his heart all day. She was singing one of the simple songs she used to sing to Lady Pauline, and every note, as it floated out to him, struck upon a chord in his heart and filled him with the pain of intense longing.

And the young man, with his hat on one side, was looking up at her with an intent expression in his small, sharp eyes.

A pang shot through Gaunt's heart. "My God! I am jealous!" he said, and between his clinched teeth, and his face grew set and stern.

He tried to soften it as he pushed the gate open and entered, but Decima, as she looked up and uttered a faint cry of welcome, saw the look and opened her innocent eyes upon him.

"Oh, Lord Gaunt, is it you? And have you brought the plans—is that them in your hand?"

"Yes, I've brought them," he said, trying to smile. "But it doesn't matter. Don't let me interrupt you."

She looked at him with a faint reproach in her lovely eyes.

"Why, we are only trying up some of the chrysanthemums. As if they were of any consequence! Let me see them! I do so want to see them. But what is the matter? she broke off, as she looked up at him with a sudden grave questioning.

"Nothing—nothing," he said, hastily for he felt Mr. Mershon's sharp eyes upon him. That gentleman dropped the string and glanced at his watch. He disliked, and was a little afraid of Lord Gaunt of Leafmore.

"I—I think I'll be going," he said, looking at Decima.

She had opened the plans and seemed quite absorbed in them.

"Oh, will you not stay? Well, good-bye, and thank you. We have tied up ever so many chrysanths, we?"

"Yes," said Mr. Mershon. "Good morning, Lord Gaunt." As he went out of the gate, Gaunt looked after him.

"Do you see much of Mr. Mershon?" he asked and cursed himself for asking.

Decima looked up from the plans absently.

"Yes, oh, yes. He is here nearly every day. He has business with father. I don't understand what it is; it is all a mystery to me—and to father also, I expect. But what is the matter? You—you look so pale and tired."

She drew nearer to him, with child-like affection and confidence, and laid her hand upon his arm.

And the strong arm, lean and muscular, the arm which had known no quiver nor uncertainty even when it had been raised in the face of death itself, had hard work to keep itself steady under the fingers which touched him so innocently.

"I've—I've had a bad night," he said, forcing a smile. "I went to bed with insomnia, and I got an attack of it last night."

"Oh, I am so sorry," she said. "Come and sit in my arbor and rest for a little while." Her hand closed on his arm, and she led him gently to a rustic summer-house in the worst state of repair. "Sit there and rest," she said. "You shall not talk, or even think. And I will look at the plans. Say!" she ran to one of the garden borders and picked some sprigs of lavender, "smell those! Are they not sweet?"

She held them up to him, and, unseen by her, he touched them with his lips. Then, with the innocence of a child, she sat close beside him and unfolded the plans again.

Her arm touched his—the summer-house was a very small affair—he could almost hear the beating of her heart; and his own heart throbbed in harmony.

"They are beautiful!" she said, nodding at the plans, as if they were a picture-book. "How clever a man must be to draw them like this! Look at that tower!" She opened out the plans so that they rested on her knees and his. "There's a bell in that tower, of course. Will it run, as Bobby would say, to a bell, Lord Gaunt?"

"Oh, yes; it will run to a bell," he said, mechanically, for her hand was touching his arm, and all his senses were throbbing.

"Will it? I am so glad! And that is the big school-room. What is the size? But I am worrying you, and I meant you to rest!" she exclaimed, remorsefully.

"It is not worrying me," he said. "There are the plans. If you like them, we'll pass them."

"Oh, I think they are beautiful!" she said. "And the school-house is too sweet for words! I should like to be school-mistress!"

"Yes?" he said; then the green jealousy gnawing at his heart forced him on. "Do you like Mr. Mershon?"

"Decima opened her eyes upon him innocently.

"What has Mr. Mershon to do with the schools?" she said. "Like him? Oh, yes, I suppose so. I never thought, never asked myself the question. But now I come to do so, yes, I think I do. How foolish that sounds! I Aunt Pauline used to say that I should never master syntax. He is very good-natured, you know; only this morning he promised me fifty pounds toward the boys' play-ground and gymnasium."

"Why did you ask him?" he said, almost roughly. "I would have given you all you wanted."

"I know you would," she said, simply; "and that is why I didn't ask you. You have done so much. Besides, it is only fair that Mr. Mershon should spend some of his money for the benefit of the people among whom he lives. He is very rich, you know."

He heard her say, "I don't know anything about him. Then he got ashamed of his petulance, of his jealousy, for her eyes were seeking his with a rather pained surprise. She had never before heard him speak in this tone. "Oh, I dare say he is a very nice young fellow. I'm—I'm rather boorish and ill-natured this morning. I always am when I don't sleep."

In an instant her face melted, so to speak, with a tender sympathy which smote him to the heart.

"I know. You could not be really unkind or unjust to any one, I think, Lord Gaunt."

"Oh, couldn't I?" he said, grimly. "No. It was only because you are tired that you were hard upon Mr. Mershon—you were hard. For, after all, what have you said? Lean back—see, it is only just lean back—and rest, quite restful."

She leaned back to show him the way, and the branches of the ivy and clematis caught in her hair. She laughed as she tried to disentangle them.

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On the Farm

Packing Produce for Market.

Packing is equally as important as any of the other operations involved in the preparation of fruits and vegetables for market. There are several important points in connection with this work worthy of consideration, probably the most important of which is honesty, writes Mr. S. B. Shaw. "Every grower's pack should be as good as his bond." Customers want honestly packed goods and they are usually willing to pay good prices for them. A grocer never loses by placing honestly packed produce on any market, be it at home or abroad.

Each package should be filled with the same grade throughout. If this is done the top may be "faced." "Facing" is the arrangement of fruit from one to three layers of fruit on the top, thus increasing the attractiveness of the package. This is an honest and perfectly legitimate practice provided the entire contents are fruits of the same grade as those placed on top. Seconds and inferior grades should never be faced with prime specimens. There is neither cash nor character in this practice. A few seconds or culls scattered in with a lot of fancy specimens gives the buyer an opportunity to discriminate against the whole package and ruins the reputation of the grower as an honest packer.

Produce should be cool and dry before being packed. Heat and moisture promote decay. Conditions of this kind should be guarded against, for decay means loss. Allow all fruit and vegetables to cool in the packing house, and have them dry before packing. They will keep longer and present a better appearance at the time of sale if handled in this way. So much of the success in marketing farm products depends upon the packing, that growers cannot be too particular in seeing that this work is done in such a way as to show their produce to best advantage when put on sale. While it is of the utmost importance that each package be filled with the same grade throughout, it is equally as important that it be done carefully. With the softer varieties of fruit and vegetables, such as peaches, plums, tomatoes and egg plant, that are usually put in small packages, each specimen should be placed by hand. This not only makes the pack more attractive, but it lessens the liability of damage resulting from bruises. Produce of a firm nature, as apples, potatoes, etc., will not bruise so readily, and as a result it is not so necessary to handle each individual specimen in packing.

Grass and Silage an Ideal Feed.

"When I get my cows into grass again there will be more milk."

This is a statement frequently heard during the last month that the herd is confined in the yard. When once on pasture the yields show a marked increase even though the animals may have had plenty of good grain and forage previously.

What is there about grass which makes it such an excellent and very satisfactory food for a milk cow? Is it not its succulent nature? Succulence means full of juice, and the juicy ration for the dairy

WARNS AGAINST DRINK.

Kaiser Thinks Young Men in Germany Use Too Much Alcohol.

The emperor, who is well known to be very abstemious in all things, thinks that German university students drink too much. A sentence proving this was used by him while receiving the students' homage during his jubilee week. His majesty, on this occasion said: "I expect you to reduce your consumption of alcohol to a marked degree."

The emperor issued a similar warning to the naval cadets of the empire in a speech which he made at Murwicks some time ago and he has several times declared that more athletics and less beer would improve the student physique.

Showing, however, how established beer drinking is as an incident of every student celebration, the fact may be mentioned that five glasses of beer for each student were paid for from the funds of the University of Berlin on the occasion of the jubilee "kommers."

It Made a Difference.

"The only thing I find to say against you, Jane, is that your washing bill is far too extravagant. Last week you had six blouses in the wash. Why, my own daughter never sends more than two."

"Ah, that may be, mum," replied Jane, "but I've to! Your daughter's sweetheart is a bank clerk, while my young man is a chimney sweep. It makes a difference, mum."

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"PURSE"-EVERING CHAP.

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