

## UNDER A SHADOW.

Continued.

He still held her hand in his; the green leaves of the climbing jasmine framed his handsome face; all his heart was in his eyes as he asked her the question.

'Tell me, Alison, now, after my first lesson, which do you prefer—fame or love?'

She raised a smiling face to his.

'Fame, Colonel Montague,' she replied, 'with all my heart.'

'I am disappointed in you, Alison.'

'Are you? I am sorry for that. I must speak the truth.'

'Better to be cheated by a lie than slain by the truth,' he quoted, but she shook her head gravely.

'Nothing of the kind. Those are horrible words. I wonder at hearing them from you.'

'I would say anything to win that look of astonishment and wonder from you,' he replied. Alison, tell me, may I come again?'

The girl bent her head, and a crimson flush came over her face as she answered, 'Yes,' and the colonel went away more satisfied with his first lesson.

'A beautiful girl,' he said to himself, but unlike others, I believe that if I asked her to be Countess of Cardyne even to-morrow she would refuse, if there was even a possibility of being a painter.'

The next moment the butler entered the school-room, intent on seeing every door and window fast. He looked wonderingly at the girl's flushed face, the dark eyes shining like golden stars. Alison took up her candle and quitted the room.

'She will make somebody's heart ache some day,' he said, solemnly, and then added: 'But it will be difficult to find that somebody here.'

It was all over, all safe, and Alison Trente was alone in her room—alone, with a strange, vague feeling of unrest, a strange, half-intoxicating sweetness haunting her, a faint glimmering of the beautiful hours and beautiful dreams life held.

'Not love!' She repeated that over and over again to herself. 'Not love!' She would never believe in that most amiable, that grandest of all weaknesses, that most mistaken of all ideas. Certainly not love.

If the beauty of his face haunted her, if, during the long silent hours of the night, she heard the sound of his voice mingling with the sighing of the winds and the rustle of leaves, she believed that it was only the intensity of her love for everything beautiful that caused it; the light of the morning sun brought afterthought. She did not like to remember how the tete-a-tete had been secured. He would not have dared to rap at the window of Lady Blanche's room, and ask her to go out with him. Was it possible that because she was lowly in station he treated her with less respect than he showed to the daughters of Lady Blanche? A more pleasing idea occurred to her—it was that he preferred her to them. A ramble by twilight with Lady Blanche or Louisa would have been insufferable to him.

'He must like me very much,' she thought, 'to have risked all that for me!—the sensation of being liked for her own sake was a novelty to her.'

That morning she was sent for to the library to write out some notes of invitation. The three ladies were all assembled, and talked with their usual liberty of speech before her. Lady Blanche was in plain words, cross; she had half anticipated a letter from the colonel that morning. Why, she could not explain, but it seemed to her that he must make her an offer. Every facility had been offered to him. The countess had most considerably allowed every opportunity for such an offer—they had had interviews in the grounds, in the conservatories, in the ball-room, but during none of these had the colonel broached the interesting subject of marriage. As a kind of last resource, Lady Blanche imagined that what he had not done by word of mouth he would by letter. He must mean something by his constant visits, and it was absurd to imagine that his attentions could ever point to any one else. With a smile of self-complacency, she said, 'It was not possible that he would look at Louisa when she was by.'

A letter had arrived in the colonel's handwriting—alas! not to her, but to the countess—containing a pressing invitation for the ladies to honor and grace by their presence a picnic that he intended giving.

The colonel's regiment was stationed at Loamwood, and the boast of the county was that it held the finest regiment in England. The Red Lancers were the handsomest men, they rode the finest horses in the kingdom, and the colonel was considered the finest man in the regiment. Head of the Red Lancers; heir to an earldom, he, after a fashion, commanded the entire county; and, when it was known that Colonel Montague intended giving a picnic, every one was desirous of attending. It would, of course, be the best of its kind; they would have the finest military music; they would have an escort of Red Lancers; there would be every facility for flirtation. The picnic was to be held in the famous woods of Wootton—woods where trees were like pictures, such a study in itself—where every now and then there came a break in the trees, and the green grass grew thick and soft, studded with flowers. The large space was rolled and made beautiful for dancing; all kinds of elegant and easy chairs were placed between the trees; there was a fire to boil a kettle, a tent for refreshment; in fact, it was, as every one declared, the most perfect entertainment of the kind ever given. The countess was flattered at being requested to take the head of this picnic, a duchess might have been proud of the honor.

She placed the letter before her daughters.

'See, Blanche,' she said, 'I consider that equivalent to an offer of marriage. The colonel would never care to have his name associated so continually with ours unless he meant something.'

I shall accept his invitation. This is really a kind letter. Who would have believed that the colonel cared for children. You see, he begs of me to let the two little girls go.'

'That is kind,' said Lady Louisa.

He even adds that we can bring some one to take the entire charge of them, if we like,' continued the countess. 'I shall write at once and tell him how pleased we shall be. It will be really a very pleasant day.'

Still Lady Blanche was cross. The letter ought to have made some special mention of her, instead of one of the charming daughters. The discussion fell while Alison was writing the letters on the dresses to be worn.

'I shall have green and white,' said Lady Blanche; 'that is always appropriate for a picnic.'

Suddenly Alison looked up from the letters and the countess caught the expression on her face.

'Green and white—you do not like that, Miss Trente?'

'No,' said Alison; 'in dress as in everything else, you must consider the surroundings. A lady should stand out, as it were, from those, as does a bright gem in a dark setting. You will be surrounded by every tint of green—green grass, green leaves—and no green that you can procure will rival the delicate hue of nature. You should wear colors that contrast, not attempt to harmonize.'

'She is right,' said Lady Louisa, solemnly; 'that is an excellent idea. What color should you advise, then, Miss Trente?'

'White, certainly; it always reminds one of a summer's day, and the sun shining. White, with delicate rose-pearl, white, with dashes of scarlet—anything that presents a piquant contrast. Do you not think that I am right? Dress should be artistic, as well as fashionable.'

'You are quite right,' said my Lady Blanche, emphatically. 'I should be glad if you would attend to my costume, Miss Trente. If Lady Blanche does take the head of the entertainment, it will be an important day for me.'

'I will do it, with pleasure,' said Alison.

The countess smiled blandly. Here was economy indeed. No need to send to Watts to pay scores of pounds for a dress, when the skillful fingers of this artistic girl could weave such magical colors; no need to employ court milliners, when taste so true and so exquisite was close at hand. The countess was delighted. She saw in the perspective unlimited dresses, all beautiful, valuable, and artistic. She saw economy that would enable her to vie any one, no matter whom. She felt most kindly disposed to the young girl, who was to be the instrument of so much good.

Forgetful in that one moment of Alison's wonderful beauty she said:

'Colonel Montague asks us to bring some one with us who will take charge of the children. The woods of Wootton are very beautiful, Miss Trente; would you like to go?'

The girl's face flushed with delight.

'I should like it,' she replied, 'better than anything else in the wide-world.'

'Then you shall go,' said my lady; and she felt a glow of benevolence, a glow of self-complacency in the idea.

Lady Blanche had not heard the words. She had gone in search of a book of costumes.

'That girl is worth her weight in gold,' said Lady Blanche, as Alison closed the door behind her. 'What an artist she is; how much she will save us!'

'She is very useful, mamma; but if you take her to Wootton you will have all the mothers and daughters in the county against you; there will not be a face there like hers; and you know the Red Lancers worship pretty faces. Be careful how you spoil Blanche's chance; that is, if she really has a chance.'

'My dear Louisa,' said the countess, loftily, 'you are very absurd; you forget that Colonel Montague is a man of the world, and, of all men I know, the least likely to ruin himself for any face, however fair. Men admire girls they never think of marrying. Can you imagine that so proud a man would look at our governess?'

'Yes, I can; the Red Lancers have a reputation for that kind of thing. Be careful, mamma; if mischief comes of it, remember that I have warned you.'

### CHAPTER XIV.

#### A DISAPPOINTMENT.

'How kind of him to ask for me to go!' thought simple Alison. 'I shall see a living picture—golden gleams of sun, rippling green foliage, a cloudless sky, moving masses of gorgeous colors, all under the summer heaven. How good of him to think of me!'

She hardly understood the quick, vivid pleasure that thrilled her face with a color that had never burned there before. So kind of Colonel Montague to give her this pleasure. She had read so much and heard so much, since she had been at the Abbey, of the Red Lancers—the handsomest men in England—it would really be a treat to see them. Alison felt light of heart as she had never done before.

The eve of the picnic came. The exquisite costumes which she had designed and helped to make were all ready—the pretty, coquettish head-dresses, neither too nor bonnet, but a picturesque mixture of both—everything was complete; my Lady Blanche retired to rest in the firm conviction that she would hear on the following day the words that she had longed for.

The morning was beautiful—the sky blue, and without a cloud; the lark singing in the air, the sun warm and bright. Not another word had been said to Alison about her going to the picnic; Lady Blanche had recognized instantly the mistake that she had made, it would indeed be useless to take to plain girls like her daughters if, at the same time, Alison Trente were going. She avoided the subject, thinking that from her silence the girl would draw her own conclusions—that she would tacitly re-

Go to the "Globe" Office

cognize the mistake, and behave with her usual good sense. That was what the countess hoped and believed, but no such idea had ever occurred to Alison.

Through the kindly help of the lady's maid, she had purchased a dress of plain white muslin; she needed no help in making it, and she had thought both by night and by day of the pleasure in store for her.

She had never even seen a picnic; she knew nothing of the world's gaieties but by name, and with this longing to hear and see something of the brilliant phases of society was mingled a desire to see again the handsome man who had so imperiously summoned her to that long twilight ramble. Would he remember all he said then? All the great ladies of the county would be there—would he turn from them to speak to her? Would he even remember her when they were by? She was curiously anxious, with an anxiety that she did not half understand. She had seen so little of life that the prospect of this one day spent among green trees and flowers, in the glitter of sunshine, listening to glorious music, perhaps even dancing herself—Alison was lost in a gleam of delight.

'The carriage will be here at twelve,' said the countess, during breakfast; but no allusion was made to Alison. Lady Blanche purposely avoided it. Lady Louisa was maliciously silent, waiting to know what Blanche would say.

In all simplicity Alison offered to assist the two sisters. Lady Louisa declined; Lady Blanche accepted her services. She did not understand what the young governess meant when she said:

'Pray allow me to do all I can for you, Lady Blanche; I shall have abundance of time for myself afterward.'

Lady Blanche felt that the words were slightly familiar, and was a trifle colder, harder, and more difficult to please than usual. Alison did not even notice it—she was away in the woods of Wootton.

Almost twelve—the countess rang in dress of purple satin and velvet mixed, Lady Louisa in a costume of peach-colored silk and white lace, Lady Blanche in a marvelously dainty dress of rose-pink, were all in the drawing-room.

Lady Blanche insisted that they should take one glass of sherry before starting. While it was being served there came into the room what seemed like a vision of perfect beauty—Alison in all the glory of her proud, ripe young beauty.

What were all the costumes in the world compared to the charm of youth and loveliness? The satin and velvet, the gleaming silk, the costly lace, all shrunk into nothing beside the fresh, fair loveliness of the young girl; the three ladies felt it as they looked at her angrily and with deep resentment. What right had she with the slender, graceful figure, the queenly carriage? What right had she with the rippling black hair, the dark beautiful eyes with long lashes, the lovely oval face, the Grecian brow, the scarlet lips so ripe and beautiful, the lovely curve of the chin, and a neck that Venus might have envied? What right had a governess with charms like these? She was dressed so plainly, yet she looked like a queen. Her muslin dress was fresh and white—she had tied it with scarlet ribbons; all the ornament she wore was a knot of scarlet ribbons at her breast, but no queen in her coronation robes ever looked more royally fair.

Lady Blanche was the first to speak. She looked at the pretty white hat with its one blush rose, the pretty gloves, and the bright, beautiful face; then she said, with cold contempt:

'Where are you going, Miss Trente?'

While Lady Louisa, looking at her mother, said in a low voice:

'Just the kind of face to introduce among the Red Lancers; they will make her a toast.'

Alison looked up in wonder.

'Where am I going, Lady Blanche? To—to the picnic, at Wootton.'

'By whose desire?' asked the imperious lady.

Alison replied, wonderingly:

'Lady Blanche was kind enough to ask me to go.'

Lady Blanche turned to the countess with flashing eyes.

'Mamma,' she said, abruptly, 'can that be true?'

'Miss Trente,' said the countess, blandly, 'will you be so kind as to go to the children? then send Suzette to me if they are ready.'

Alison quitted the room with a flush of hot indignation on her face. What could it all mean, those proud, contemptuous looks and words?

'Mamma,' repeated Lady Blanche, scornfully, as the door closed behind her—'mamma, are you mad? Do you see how beautiful that girl looks? What can you be thinking about? Surely you never asked her seriously to go to this picnic?'

'I did ask her,' replied the countess, who seriously resented her daughter's tone of voice, and looked very much inclined to have her own way. 'I did ask her; the colonel said some one could come to take charge of the children.'

'And you asked her! I could not have believed that a woman of the world could have made such a mistake. You would positively introduce Alison Trente, a poor governess, among such a set of men as the Red Lancers? You know they went in a body to Weststaff to see a girl whom they called "the pretty Miss Bedelle"; they talked of nothing else for three days afterward; and now, just as with infinite pains we have succeeded so well, just as the colonel is on the point of proposing to me, you deliberately throw this girl in his way. I say that it is cruel of you—quite cruel!' and Lady Blanche, overcome with feelings of mortification, burst into a passion of tears.

'Blanche!' cried the countess, in agony, 'pray do not do that; you will make your face so red you will completely destroy your appearance. I beg of you to be more careful; after all, what can it matter? Miss Trente goes there in a very subordinate position—a kind of upper nurse; no one will recognize her, no one will pay her any attention. She will spend the whole of the day with the children.'

'You could no more hide the sun than you could hide the beauty of a face like that!' cried Lady Louisa; 'the officers will rave about her. I foresaw it, mamma, from the very first.'

'Then why did you not speak?' asked the countess, angrily. 'I was really hoping that the girl had forgotten it. You see she has evidently set her mind upon it, and she is so useful over your dresses and all that kind of thing, that I do not care to offend her.'

Lady Blanche looked up angrily.

'What trifles weigh with you, mamma! All my prospects in life are at stake yet you think of dresses and such foolish nonsense. Only last week, when Colonel Montague dined here, I heard him say that he prized himself on his capability of going mad over a pretty face; of course it was an exaggeration, but I know the influence beauty has over him. Now he is here, I have nothing to fear on that score—we have no beauties at Loamwood; and just as I am winning the game I have played so long, you bring a girl like this on the scene. I do not like her, but I am not blind to the fact that she is beautiful.'

The countess seemed struck with these words.

'It is very unfortunate,' she said. 'Go up-stairs, Blanche, and bathe your eyes in eau-de-cologne. I am sorry it has occurred.'

Lady Blanche turned to her mother.

'You can please yourself entirely, mamma,' she said. 'One thing is very certain—if your governess goes to the picnic, I shall stay at home.'

'Now, Blanche,' said Lady Blanche, 'let me beg of you not to be obstinate.'

'I am not obstinate, mamma. I repeat simply that if she goes I shall remain at home.'

'Very well,' repeated the countess, resignedly, 'she shall remain at home; that, of course, will offend her, and you will be the sufferers in the end.' Lady Blanche rang the bell. 'Will you tell Miss Trente I wish to speak to her?' she said. And Alison, with a look of expectation on her face, entered the room.

'Miss Trente,' said Lady Blanche, never once glancing at her; 'I am compelled to change my arrangements; I find I must take Suzette with me; you would not like to pass as the children's nursemaid.'

Alison looked at the averted face of the countess, the hard, cold features of Lady Louisa, the tear-stained eyes of Lady Blanche, and some vague idea of the truth occurred to her; for some reason or other, inscrutable to her, they did not want her to go. Still there was no resource but perfect obedience. She made no reply, but turned to quit the room. Then the countess hastened most graciously to add:

'I am sorry if you feel any disappointment, Miss Trente; I must find some recreation for you that you would really enjoy. I hope you will spend the day happily; the picture-gallery and the library are all open to you. Good morning.'

With a stately inclination of the head, the countess signified that the interview was over, and Alison retired.

Lady Louisa had not spoken. Lady Blanche had not looked at her, or she would have seen that the fair face grew suddenly pale.

'They do not want me to go,' said Alison to herself, with an aching heart; and they have nothing but pleasure—I have none. They do not want me.'

Very slowly and sadly she returned now to her room. She took off the pretty white dress and the crimson ribbons, of which she had been so proud, she placed them so carefully away; then—for she was only eighteen, and had never known a pleasure in all her life—then she wept bitter, passionate tears.

### CHAPTER XV.

#### A PLEASANT SURPRISE.

A tangled mass of trees, copper birch, that looked like burnished gold; slanting shadows, that fell lightly on the thick, soft grass; the ripple of a thousand leaves; the hum of tiny insects as they settled on the boughs and flitted through the air—a woodland solitude. In the midst of it sits Alison Trente. She has escaped from the house, escaped from all her surroundings, and is luxuriating in the freedom of the sunlit hours. She wished that she had been borne a gypsy, so as to live forever in the free, fresh air—no warm rooms no half-stifling perfumes, no fine ladies to tease and irritate her. The grand face of nature wore a smile; there was calm, rest, peace and happiness—no pictures so beautiful as those that the sun painted on the grass and the leaves. Alison was happy, though the tears were hardly dry upon her face. She had changed the white dress for a black one, and that seemed to suit her even better. The fair face and neck rose, flower-like, from the dark folds. She had taken off her hat, and the red leaves of the wild rose fell in profusion around her. She was singing to herself in a low voice, when suddenly the crashing of boughs and abrupt breaking through the trees startled her. To her intense surprise, Colonel Montague stood by her.

'Alison! Alison!' he said, 'you here? I was afraid that after all my trouble, all my plans and inventions, I should not see you.'

She looked up at him helplessly.

'I thought you were at the picnic,' she said.

He laughed.

'Nay, Alison, I am here. Do you not know, can you not guess, that I arranged that picnic purposely that I might spend some time with you? I thought that they would bring you. I see that I am mistaken; they had too much worldly wisdom. If you had gone with them, I should have contrived some way of seeing you. It is better as it is.'

'I fancied that you would have liked me to go,' said Alison. 'Your letter said some one could take charge of the children.'

'Of course,' he said, 'it was all for you Alison. I felt sure that they would bring you.'

'Lady Blanche said I was to come at first,' said Alison, her face flushing with indignation, as she remembered her contemptuous dismissal; afterward she altered her mind and told Suzette to go.'

'I know the reason why,' said the colonel. 'Do you?'

'No,' replied Alison; 'I cannot even guess.'

Colonel Montague laughed; but it was not the laugh that Lady Blanche would have been pleased to hear.

'I know,' he said. 'If you had been as plain as you are beautiful, they would have taken you.'

'Oh, no,' said Alison; 'it was not that.'

'Yes, it was that, Alison. Now, listen to me. See how greedily I crave even one hour of your society. Listen! As soon as I found that you were not with them, I understood the matter at once, and I said to myself that Alison—the Alison for whom I had done all—was at home alone. I did not lose one instant. I went at once to one of the men, and arranged that I was to be sent for suddenly. It was well arranged; an orderly galloped up to me with a folded paper, after reading which, I went up to Lady Blanche and told her how very sorry I was that I was sent for and would be absent for two hours. I guessed that you would be rambling in these woods; you told me how you loved them. I determined upon coming to try if I could find you here. I have ridden as no man ever rode, unless he had the same object in view. My horse is covered with foam.'

'Where is your horse?' interrupted Alison.

'I have tied him to one of the trees over there.'

'But,' said Alison, in alarm, 'has any one seen you come here?'

'No; and if they did, what will it matter? Now, Alison, cast away all fear, and say at least, that I deserve a smile for having ridden so hard to see you. Say that, and I shall be content.'

He threw himself down on the grass by her side, and looked pleadingly in her face.

'Alison, sweet, will you not say one word to me?'

'You should not call me "sweet," she said, with grave rebuke.'

'But you are sweet, sweeter than lilies and roses, or all fair flowers that bloom. Sweeter than the clematis there over your head. You are sweeter to me than all the world besides. Why should I not tell you so? What wrong can there be in it if I repeat a thousand times over, sweetest of all sweetests? Does it harm you?'

'Perhaps not,' she replied, with a dreamy smile.

'Forget all that nonsense, Alison. Let this be an enchanted wood; you shall be a fairy princess, I am a prince come to woo you.'

'Come to—to what did you say, Colonel Montague?'

'To woo you,' he repeated. 'Now, cruel Alison, are you going to quarrel with me over that word?'

'I have no wish to quarrel with you at all; but you speak so strangely. No one ever said such words to me before.'

'No one has ever called you "sweet" Alison?'

'No, never,' she replied, with great emphasis.

'Nor offered to woo you?' he continued.

'Certainly not, Colonel Montague,' said Alison.

'Well, we are in Fairyland now, Alison; and in Fairyland every one tells the truth. I intend to woo you, if I dare—to win you, if I can.'

She was only eighteen—a child in everything save years—full of bright dreams and fair fancies. His words made her tremble; her heart beat; her pulse thrilled; pain and pleasure seemed to sway her alternately; her beautiful face flushed, and drooped from the love in his eyes. She tried to rise from her mossy throne; but, with a gentle grasp, he detained her.

'I do not want to be wooed,' she said, 'and I will not be won.'

Colonel Montague laughed.

'So says the pretty bird as it flutters in the captor's hands.'

'I am not a bird, nor are you my captor,' she replied; and the laugh deepened on the colonel's face.

'I will not prophesy,' he said; 'that might anger you; but I can see what will be. I come of a race that never let I dare not wait upon I would. But, Alison, we will not talk of you or of me; we are in Fairyland. I will tell you, shall I, of my wanderings by night in the fair city of Venice, when there was only the light of the stars on the water, and the faint sigh of a lute on the air—shall I tell you of that?—of the marble palaces, rearing their stately heads from the azure water—of silent, deep, swift, dark currents that hide—who can tell me what they hide?'

'Yes,' said Alison; 'tell me of that—of legends I have read, where a lovely lady, whose bright eyes rivaled the stars, has been led out on a balcony, all fragrant with flowers, and with a dagger suddenly plunged in her heart, has been thrown into the silent depths below. Venice seems to be full of such places—full of pictures and of legends, before which all the brilliancy and gaiety of a new world fade into nothing. Tell me more,' cried Alison.

She had forgotten all else, poor child—the shining beauty of the leaves, the music and fragrance of the summer woods, the fact that she was alone there with the handsomest man in her majesty's service. She had forgotten everything except the words that he was uttering—no matter to her who spoke them, they were all pictures. She saw Venice, the Rialto, the canal, the gondolas, the picturesque gondoliers, the beautiful women, the noble men. She sighed with unutterable longing, unutterable content. She stretched out her hand, white arms, the passionate artist soul was all awake.

'I must go,' she said. 'I must see it.'

To be continued.

for Tags, Bill Heads, etc.

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