

# A Mad Love.

By the author of "Lover and Lord."

CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

The rest of the day passed pleasantly and happily to the young stranger, and to the kindly old pair, into whose gray life she seemed to bring a half-forgotten brightness and warmth. She was so charmingly pretty, so pleasing and ready to be pleased, so amusing and easy to amuse, that she seemed to make herself at once at home alike in their house and their hearts.

Mr. Medwin was absolutely fascinated. The resemblance to his dead daughter had ceased to trouble him with one painful pang of memory, and, though to his wife's more faithful nature there was still a sharp sting in every look and gesture that recalled the forgotten dead, she was too just and generous to resist or deny the girl's inherent charm.

Soon after lunch, Mr. Medwin went off, a little against his will, to attend a magistrate's meeting in Scantlebury; and, left alone with her aunt, Ethel Rose-Trevor's high spirits seemed to sober down suddenly, a fact that Mrs. Medwin noticed with a little self-reproach.

"I am afraid that the rain will count as a point in your favor in the great international fight, Ethel," she said, looking at the great drops that fell thickly and fast now, and rendered the closing of the French window and the speedy retreat from the rose-wreathed veranda to the rose-filled drawing-room imperatively necessary. "Our brilliant morning ends badly, you see; there will be no drive for us to-day."

"So much the better," Ethel answered a little absently.

"And no callers; so you will not make the acquaintance of our neighbors to-day."

"Better still!" the girl cried vehemently; then, as she met the other's mildly astonished gaze, she added, with a little nervous smile, "No, I am not in the least misanthropic; I love my kind. And do not think I am shy; but just to-day I want a long talk with you."

"And you shall have it, my dear. But first touch the bell. A fire is always welcome in wet weather, and there has come, I think, a sudden chill with the rain."

Ethel obeyed, and, the order given, seated herself at a table by the window, and began rather listlessly to turn over the pages of a large photograph-album that lay there. Face after face was passed in indifferent review—they were all alike, unfamiliar and uninteresting to her. She paused a little over those of her uncle and aunt, mentally deciding that they should sit again, and to an artist who would do them more justice—not make such a pair of odious smirking nonentities of two really good-looking people.

"It is too bad," she said indignantly; and then she paused again, this time over what she knew must be Florence Medwin's picture, for it seemed a replica of her own face. Despite the change in the fashion of the hair and dress, it seemed to the girl as though she were looking into a mirror.

"Were we absolutely identical—mere shadows of each other—Doppelgänger, as the German say?" she thought, with a little shiver, for the fancy was a weird one, and sent a curious thrill through her young frame. "Her fate was a sad one—so much, at least, I know. Will mine be like it?"

She turned the page hurriedly, glad to escape from the face that haunted her, and gazed, with a desperate effort to be interested and change the current of her thoughts, upon the two faces that came next.

They were two large-sized heads, and each face bore a faint indefinite likeness to the other, though the man's had a beauty and distinction that the woman's altogether lacked—a look that, even in Ethel's absorption of thought, roused and interested her in a strange fashion.

"What a handsome face!" was her first impetuous criticism, as her bright eyes noted the faultless line of head and feature, the long sweep of the heavy mustache that effectually hid the mouth, the arched brows and large somber-looking eyes; her second came with an involuntary sigh—"And what a sad one!"

She felt a light touch upon her shoulder, and looking up, saw Mrs. Medwin standing by her side and quietly surveying the open page.

"You do not know those people, Ethel," she said gently, and, though there was nothing in her manner to betray it, Ethel guessed that the words cost her an effort.

"No. Are they brother and sister? There is some likeness between them."

"A very slight one," Mrs. Medwin said, as though the comparison displeased her, as indeed it did, she being very tenacious in her likes and dislikes, even when, as in this case, the latter seemed quite groundless. "They are cousins only. Ethel, this is Lady Dare's niece, Crystal Joyce; and this"—she paused and drew her breath a little quickly—"this is Sir Bruce Dare."

The violet eyes strayed again to the page, then back to Mrs. Medwin's face, and they grew almost beseeching in their sweet dumb sympathy.

"Sir Bruce Dare?" the girl repeated shyly. "Was not he—I heard something vaguely at the time, but I never really knew."

"You shall know now, dear. Bruce Dare was my poor Florrie's lover, almost her husband. Her death made him an exile for seven years, and nearly broke his heart!"

## CHAPTER V.

A brief silence followed the last words—a silence full of pity on the girl's part, as Mrs. Medwin was gratefully aware. She drew forward a stool, and said, with a little caressing smile—

"Sit there, Ethel. You must hear your poor cousin's story sooner or later, and, as no one is likely to interrupt us, there can be no better time than now."

Ethel seated herself at Mrs. Medwin's knees and raised her lovely glowing face, with a sort of wistful gladness, to the sweet patient one that had almost regained its wonted serenity.

"I should like to hear it," she said, with unmistakable fervor. "I was wishing to ask before you spoke. But are you sure it will not hurt you to think or speak of Florence?"

"My dear, I think of her always, and I would rather you heard the story from me than as it is told by the gossip of the place. It is not a long story, child; so grim a tragedy could hardly be told in fewer words. Just seven years ago," Mrs. Medwin went on, staring thoughtfully into the bright heart of the fire, and speaking as slowly as though she deciphered with difficulty some story written there—"I thought myself the happiest woman in the world—there seemed nothing wanting to make my bliss complete; such moments do come in life, Ethel, and the sad philosophy of experience teaches us to dread them as the harbingers of bitterest pain. But I had not learned my lesson then, and I feared nothing, doubted nothing. The future was so full of brilliant promise, the present of such calm content."

"Florence was then just nineteen—your age, Ethel—and had been back only a few months from the Parisian school to which we had spared her for the space of one long year. It had been a sore wrench to part with our only child, but she had particularly wished to accompany a girl friend of hers, and in all things Florrie's wish was law to us. Poor darling, she never knew the full extent of her power, or never cared to use it—if she had, what a tyrant she might have become!"

"Punctually at the end of the year her father fetched her home, and then, when we saw her in her ripened grace and beauty, I think neither James nor I repented the sacrifice we had made."

"She was most lovely, but I need not tell you that," Mrs. Medwin said, brushing the soft black curls from the earnest upturned face. "In all things you are her living image, Ethel—in all things physical, that is, for you are brighter and quicker, less shy and reserved in manner than Florrie."

"That is to say I am a rough colonial, perhaps?"

"No, I think it was a constitutional difference. Florrie was cold almost to a fault in manner; it was at all times difficult for her to express any deep feeling, and she showed few signs of affection, even to those she loved best. Now you—"

"I am a little given to gush, I know," Ethel interrupted, with a penitent shake of her pretty dusky head; "but I can not help it, Aunt Annie. When anything moves me strongly, the words rush to my lips just as the tears spring to my eyes, and I can no more keep the one back than I can the other; but please go on."

"Well, such as she was, with her one fault of temperament, Florrie was our idol, and we were not alone in our idolatry. She was always the very reverse of a coquette; but her very coldness, coupled with her rare and striking beauty, gave her a piquant charm; and soon after her appearance all the eligibles in Scantlebury, together with all the more or less desirable birds of passage in the garrison, were enrolled as her ardent admirers."

"But she treated them all alike with a royal indifference that delighted her father who thought few men in the world, and certainly no one in Scantlebury, worthy of his beautiful child."

"She is waiting for a duke—she knows her value!" he cried, with a complacent chuckle, as we returned from one of the entertainments at which Florrie had treated each of her adorers with an icy impartiality that left them one and all devoid of hope. "It was as good as a comedy to see her sending those youngsters to the right-about-to-night. She was so cool about it too! No wonder they grew just a little savage at the last!"

"I smiled because he seemed to expect it; but in my heart I did not relish the situation quite as much as he. In the first place, I thought the child was making enemies, and in the next—though I should have disliked as much as any one to see her flushed with any vulgar pride of conquest, or degenerating into a mere flirt—I had a vague uneasy consciousness that such absolute and genuine indifference was a little unnatural in a young and healthy girl."

"However I had no wish to lessen my husband's satisfaction, or share my formless doubts with him; so I only answered

lightly that even Florrie had better moderate her pretensions a little, seeing that marriageable dukes were so very few and far between."

"As to that, we might put up with a marquise—a specially eligible marquise, of course," James said jocosely; then, suddenly dropping his lighter tone, he added soberly, "But I tell you what it is, Annie; I have a fancy—a prophetic fancy in my head—I think we shall see our daughter Lady Dare."

"Do you?" I responded, without much emotion, for the question had been frequently discussed between us before; and we had both agreed that our young neighbor would be a son-in-law after our own hearts, if he would only give up his love of travel and adventure and settle down decorously at home, as there was every hope and prospect that he would, now that he had succeeded to both title and estates."

"Yes; I wish he would come home. I want Florrie to know him before any of these whippersnapper good-for-naughts get a chance of turning her head, or winning her heart. Not that she seems in much danger," he added, relapsing into complacent enjoyment of the joke. "Still I wish he would come."

"I wished it too, Ethel, though I need not say I was in no hurry to lose Florrie; but we could hardly hope to keep a girl so beautiful and so much admired with us forever, and it would be the next best thing to keeping her to have her at Dareholme, which is not more than a couple of miles from here."

"Well, the wish was soon fulfilled in its fullest sense. Bruce Dare came home with his widowed mother and her niece, Crystal Joyce, upon whom he had been in dutiful attendance at one of the German baths; and, before he had met Florrie a half dozen times, it was evident not only to us, but to all who saw him, that he was hopelessly and helplessly in love."

"Her feelings were more difficult to guess. Only by the fact that she was a little colder, shyer and more distant in her manner to Bruce Dare than to any of her other admirers, could I gather that he had gained a place in her thoughts; but, strange to say, that gave me a little hope, and by and by that hope became a certainty."

"The coldness that would have alarmed a less ardent lover had no effect upon Bruce Dare, or rather it seemed only to increase his determination to win that on which his heart was set. And, while James and I still doubted whether she would deign to listen to the story of his love, he came to us one day, and proudly told us she was won."

"You will give her to me, sir?" he asked, his handsome face all aglow, his eyes shining with triumphant joy. "You can not doubt that I will love and guard and cherish her to my life's end?"

"There was an almost painful eagerness in the question—a passion that jarred a little upon my ear. I looked rather uneasily at James; but his face expressed only unalloyed delight."

"I do not, my boy," your uncle replied heartily. "I give her to you without a single fear, and I do not mind acknowledging now that this marriage has been the great wish of my heart. But you must be content to marry a father and mother-in-law as well, Bruce, for we can never consent to be parted from Florrie long."

"It is a bargain—I marry you all," the young man responded joyously, returning James's hand-shake with a fervent grip; then he turned with his shy half-foreign grace to me. "And you, Mrs. Medwin—you do not grudge me Florrie?" he asked, fixing his large eyes wistfully upon my face. "You too will give her freely to me and say something kind!"

"Why it was that the words he asked for died upon my lips then, Ethel, and that standing in the warmth and brightness of the August sunshine, I shivered with a sudden deadly chill, I can not tell. The horror I felt was and is wholly unaccountable. I only know that it came upon me then and there, paralyzing my speech, and making me stare, in blank and stupid silence, at the man whom that silence must have cruelly hurt. If it did not hurt my husband it seriously annoyed him."

"Have you nothing to say, Annie?" James said, in a tone of angry surprise. "Silence is not very kind or civil here."

"The sharp impatient tone broke the spell. I saw the pained and troubled look on Bruce Dare's handsome face, and hastened with remorseful eagerness to assure him that I too was pleased."

"He brightened up instantly, and James too was satisfied. I suppose they both attributed my silence to nervous excitement, and presently even I ceased to think of that curious thrill as of a presentiment."

"The engagement gave general satisfaction, and all went smoothly from the moment it was announced. Lady Dare came over the next day in a flutter of delighted excitement, to fold her new daughter to her heart," as she expressed it in her rather theatrical and affected way, and to express to me her genuine delight at the prospect of seeing her errant son settle down soberly at last."

"It is such an exquisite arrangement for us, my dear Mrs. Medwin," she said effusively, "for it will keep our children always with us—with Crystal and me at the Dover House. You and Mr. Med-

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win here, and Bruce and dear Florrie at Dareholme, we shall be quite a happy family."

"I agreed with her that the arrangement suited us all excellently well; and she went on musingly—

"Oh, excellently, and dear calm Florrie will be the wife of all others for Bruce, who is just a trifle wild! Oh, no," she added, with a reassuring smile as she saw my look of surprised displeasure, for I had certainly never dreamed of associating any thought of gross dissipation with Bruce Dare; "his is quite an original and very harmless wildness, I assure you! I only alluded to his taste for wandering and adventure."

"His gypsy taste I always call it," Crystal Joyce said, raising her large light eyes to Lady Dare's darkly handsome face.

"It was the first time she had spoken since her murmured greeting to Florrie and me when she first entered the house and I knew that she spoke with an insolent meaning now—I should have known it, even if I had not seen the other's sudden flush and frown, for a mischievous county legend asserted that, though Lady Dare's father was a man of birth and breeding, his so-called Italian wife had in fact been neither more nor less than a lovely wandering gypsy."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## What Not to Say.

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Mr. Estabrooks produced a copy of Blackwood's Magazine for October 1832, for which he was indebted to Mr. J. C. Robertson. It contained a full page advertisement of "The London Genuine Tea warehouse, No. 9 Waterloo place, Edinburgh." The work was done in two colors with a very artistic design appropriate to the tea trade and was quite as beautiful and striking as the most ambitious advertisements in the magazine of to-day. Had Red Rose Tea been handled by this enterprising Edinburgh tea house, it would no doubt have been made as popular in Scotland as it is to-day in the Maritime Provinces.—St. John Gazette.

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