

# A Mad Love.

By the author of "Lover and Lord."

CHAPTER XV.—Continued.

The doctor hesitated a moment, glancing from the man, whose life was so surely and swiftly slipping away, to the folded paper in his hand, but the former repeated his impatient "Read!" and his own roused interest gave the injunction force.

So, in a voice which trembled over the opening sentences, but which grew firm and strong as he went on, and with Gustave Ducloux's burning eyes fixed upon his face, he read the dying man's confession:

"I was born a coward and I die a coward's death, without the miserable courage to avenge the girl I loved—the girl I left to die. How I dared to love Florence Medwin, knowing the difference between us, knowing myself for what I was, I can not tell. I only know that, from the first moment of our meeting, I loved—nay worshipped the beautiful English girl."

"I was an artist struggling in Paris, and she a girl at school there. We met often at the house of a common friend, and from the first something drew us together. She was rich, and well-connected, I poor and friendless; but she cared nothing for that, or rather she was so filled with the enthusiasm of romance that that only gave me a fresh charm in her eyes."

"But I cannot dwell upon that time. We met and met again, openly and clandestinely. We were betrothed lovers soon; but our love was to be a secret until her school-days were over. Then I was to follow her to London, to win fame and fortune there, and when they were mine, to go to Mr. Medwin and ask him boldly for his daughter's hand."

"So, in a dream of bliss to come, our days wore away, and the time for her return to England drew near. One day—there is only one other in all my life that holds such agonizing memories—she and I were sitting together in a shady corner of the Luxembourg Gardens, talking happily of our future life. It was a spring day, soft and brilliant, full of pleasant sights and sounds. Her little Maltese dog, snow-white, with a scarlet ribbon knotted at his throat, was curled up in my arms, asleep; it was almost as fond of me as of its mistress, and she prettily affected to be jealous of its love."

"Fido thinks he must have a man to protect him; he does not consider himself safe with me," she would say, rubbing her soft peach-like cheek on the dog's flossy head, and looking archly at me."

"We were talking earnestly, as I say, when she suddenly broke off with a look of alarm."

"On, Gustave, hide Fido!" she cried quickly. "Here is such a horrid-looking dog; and the people seem so frightened, they are crying out and running away. Perhaps it is mad."

"Why was fate so cruel to me? What had I done to be put to a test in which my nerve was sure to fail? I turned quickly, and saw coming down the alley a dog—a huge gaunt hound—with rolling blood-shot eyes and wide panting jaws flecked with foam. As I looked every thought and feeling was swallowed up in a horrible albatross maddening fear. I did not even remember that Florence shared my peril; I only thought that in another moment the fangs of the maddened brute would be at my throat—that he would leave the horrible virus in my veins, so that I, too, should go mad and die in agony unutterable."

"Suddenly there flashed through my numbed brain the remembrance of a ghastly Russian story I had read; of a mother who, seeing her sleigh followed by wolves, flung out her children one by one, and so drove on to safety, purchasing her own life at the price of theirs. I had thought her a monster when I read it, but hers seemed a prudent action to me now. It appeared a heaven-sent remembrance in the hour of need."

"Gustave! Florence cried again; and, with a yell of rage and terror, I flung Fido full in the face of the advancing hound—I can see the gleam of the white curls and scarlet ribbon now. Then, pushing her from me, I fled for my very life toward the palace, and away from the scene of my disgrace."

"I remember nothing of what followed—nothing of the next ten minutes, during which I crouched in a door-way, breathless and mad with terror—I heard shot ring out, followed by a cheer, and saw the people crowding back to the place they had deserted a few minutes back. Then, and not till then, I realized what I had done, and felt that any torture would have been better than that intolerable burning shame. How could I face the girl I had deserted, whose trust I had so cruelly betrayed?"

"Presently there came to me a faint hope. Perhaps she had not seen—not known—perhaps she too had gone mad with terror, and thought and acted only for herself. Something, however, told me this was hardly probable; still it was a chance; so I walked slowly back to the alley, feeling as a man about to be tried for his life might feel; and the first person I saw as I entered it was Florence herself. She was sitting on the bench we

had occupied together so short a time before—the little dog lay on her lap dead, and her tears were falling fast upon the pretty curly coat that was darkly stained with blood. I knew—how well I knew! that that little dumb creature had parted us forever."

"'Florence,' I said humbly; and she raised her head with such a look of horror and aversion as I never saw in any eyes before."

"'Do not speak to me—I can not bear it yet!' she cried, her pale lips quivering passionately over the words. 'If you have any mercy go away!'"

"'But I may see you again? You will listen to—you will forgive me?' I implored, beside myself with shame and misery, mad at the thought that I had lost her and disgraced myself forever in her eyes. 'Oh, Florence, you will speak to me again!'"

"'I had thought her until that instant the gentlest, most loving, most easily led of girls; but there was a tragic passion and a sternness that appalled me in her voice and eyes as she lifted up the little dog."

"'When you can give back this little harmless life—the life you threw away in your cruel cowardice—I will speak to you again, but not till then!'"

And she kept her word. Shortly afterward she left Paris, and for nearly a year I heard of her no more; and then, being in a London coffee house one day, I chanced to take up a newspaper and read in its fashionable intelligence that she was to be married at a place called Scantlebury to an English baronet—Sir Bruce Dare!"

The news caused me keenest pain, though in truth it made no difference to me. Lady Dare would be as much and as little to me as Florence Medwin could ever be again, but yet I felt in that moment that I had lost my last sustaining hope."

"The marriage was fixed for the first of October, and on the last day of September I went down, not to Scantlebury, but to the nearest town. Some strange yearning dragged me to the place against my will; I did not mean to make my presence known, to speak to Florence, but I felt that I must see her in her bridal dress, beside the man who had taken my place, and then perhaps I should understand and submit."

"The evening of the thirtieth was fine and bright, the distance to Scantlebury from my hotel but a couple of miles along the highroad, and, having ordered my dinner I strolled out that way to pass away the time. Had I known whither that road would lead me, I would, coward as I am, have turned my feet the other way, and walked straight out into the wide placid sea that rolled between me and the France I never should have left."

"But I knew nothing, thought of nothing but my own grief—good heavens, what a mockery of misery it seems now!—until, turning a corner sharply I found myself face to face with Florence Medwin, hastening along and looking the very embodiment of joy."

"'She knew me instantly. She mastered her first shrinking impulse to draw back and said with grave gentleness—'

"'You here, Gustave?'"

"I stammered out some incoherent explanation and apology; I wished her happiness and implored her pardon in one breath; and I saw her pretty lip quiver and a sudden look of trouble in her sweet eyes."

"'Perhaps I was cruel to you,' she said, with a little sigh. 'You could not help your nature, and you have been generous to me; I will try to forget that distressing incident in the Luxembourg Gardens, Gustave.'"

"I could have fallen at her feet and worshipped her, she was so beautiful and good, but I did not. Then, as always, my evil angel mastered me; I raised the little hand to my lips, and then hastily knowing what I did, I drew the slim figure to me and kissed the sweet face, as men do kiss those whom they know their lips may never touch again."

"She was too bewildered even to struggle, and for some seconds lay passive in my arms; then suddenly she wrenched herself away, and cried, her eyes blazing, her voice trembling, with a very passion of scorn—"

"'Go, if you value your life—as you do—you coward, go!'"

"Stung by the words, I turned to obey her, but found there was a new actor upon the scene. Coming toward us with hurried steps was a young slender man, a man whose face was black with passion, and in whose eyes there shone the light of murder."

"I tried to run, but the old albatross terror paralyzed me. I felt that in another moment this man, who was mad with passion, would be upon me, and my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, my teeth chattered in my head."

"'Scoundrel!' the new-comer cried, his voice shaking with the savage fury that possessed him; and, as I felt his breath upon my face, and saw him lift his stick, I knew that my last hour had come. Eu, the upraised hand never touched me, the blow I dreaded never fell—for with a wild broken cry Florence flung herself between us, and clung about the man's neck in agony."

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run. Bruce, dear Bruce, listen—you must listen to me!"

"But the man was as mad with jealous fury as I with selfish fear. I saw him struggling desperately to release himself from that wild agonized clasp, saw that in another moment he must be free, and, nerved by that sight, I shook off my lethargy and flew for my very life. I never thought of her, of anything but the danger menacing myself. I never looked back until I reached the crest of the hill, and then—oh, Heaven help and pity me, shall I ever forget, shall I ever cease to see the sight I gazed upon then?"

"For a few moments the two figures stood together almost as I had left them. Presently however the man bent forward and clasped the girl's white throat with his slender muscular hands—it almost seemed that I could see the fingers tighten until she ceased to struggle; then he flung the lifeless body from him with savage force, and moved off in the opposite direction to that I had taken but a moment back."

"By and by I made my way unobserved back to the place whence I had come. Fury, grief, and scorn raged within me but the very intensity of my terror gave me an outward calm; some subtly-selfish instinct warned me that any show of agitation might bring suspicion on myself. Murder had been done, and who should say or prove that I, a rejected lover, was not the murderer?"

"The thought haunted me to the exclusion of all others—for nights I never closed my eyes and through the long waking hours I saw, not, as another man might have done, Florence Medwin in her dread death-struggle, but myself in the dock or on the hincous scaffold. Surely I died a thousand deaths in that long week of agony; but through it all I never ceased to play my part. I forced myself to listen to the gossip of the place—nay, even to join in it, and the fevered conjectures as to the murderer's identity and chances of escape; and in my character of artist I actually sketched and presented my landlady with a water-color representation of the scene of the tragedy. She was affected to tears by the gift."

"Such a sweet spot as it is!" she said mournfully regarding the picture. "Oh, even if he recovers, poor Sis Bruce will never care to walk there again!"

"Is it thought that he will die?" I asked with careless sympathy; and the landlady shook her head."

"There is hardly a chance for him; he just worshipped the poor dear young lady, and her shocking death has turned his brain."

"Well, it is a terrible tragedy," I said, with an excellent affectation of regret; "but of course Sir Bruce was not present at the inquest? Is he good-looking, Mrs. Cripps?"

"All the Dares are handsome," replied the woman proudly; "and Sir Bruce is the handsomest of the lot—but you can judge for yourself, sir."

"And, drawing a large photograph from a dirty album, she placed it triumphantly before me. One glance was enough; the murderer was—Sir Bruce Dare."

"And now the story is told. I have kept the secret well. While I live it will never be known. When I am dead the world's scorn and the world's vengeance will be alike powerless to do me harm. I do not ask for pity or pardon; I only ask that some one braver and stronger than I will avenge Florence Medwin's death."

"GUSTAVE DUCLOUX"

The paper slipped from the doctor's hand; he stared with horror into the eager face of his patient.

"Bruce Dare," he echoed blankly, and Gustave Ducloux broke in with weak passion—

"And this is his wedding-day! Oh, doctor, waste no time, or your sin will equal mine—another life will be sacrificed! Go down—at once—to Scantlebury—and take that paper with you."

(TO BE CONTINUED)



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## FIPS ON THE MARKET.

Why One Broker Absolutely Refuses to Post His Friends.

"A tip to a friend! Not on your life!" said a veteran New Orleans broker, chatting over cigars and coffee in a restaurant last night. "I've responded on hard luck stories as often as the next fellow," he continued earnestly, "and I'll do it again, but a tip on the market—no! I wouldn't give it if I knew it was a lead pipe cinch and the other chap needed the money to buy bread. That sounds hard, and it's the result of hard experience. When I was young and green, I used to put folks next to 'good things' now and then, and there was never a case—not one—in which I didn't have a reason to curse my folly. In the first place, nobody who gets a secret of that kind is going to keep it."

"One day years ago, just to give you an illustration, a man who was an old friend of my father's and who was badly down on his luck, came to ask my private advice on a little speculative investment. I took him into my back office, swore him to secrecy and gave him a piece of information of considerable value. I instructed him exactly what to do and impressed upon him that the least leak would ruin the whole thing and incidentally destroy his own chances of making some money. I was so earnest that he got indignant and asked me if I meant to insult him by doubting his word."

"Well, inside of an hour he had told the secret, in strict confidence, of course, to two particular friends, each of whom proceeded to tell it in strict confidence to other particular friends, giving me as authority all along the line, and before night it was public property. You may imagine in what sort of position I was placed. Men who had lost thousands of dollars through my indiscretion didn't feel inclined to listen to explanations, and some of them are my enemies to this day. I don't blame 'em."

"When I took my man to task, he was dumfounded. He swore by all that was holy he hadn't said a word, and when I clinched the thing with positive proof he got mad. A chap who does you an involuntary injury is always sure to hate you afterward. That's one instance out of a dozen differing slightly in detail, but all having the same moral—namely, don't give tips."—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

## WHEN FORT HILL WENT UP.

The Experience of a Colored Man in the Explosion.

"Speaking of comical incidents in the civil war," said Captain Oscar Ludwig, "brings to mind an incident of the blowing up of Fort Hill at Vicksburg. Fort Hill, it should be understood, was the key to the Confederate system of fortifications. Our regiment, the Twentieth Illinois, had charged up to the fort on May 22, but was ordered back on the 23d and laid siege in a regular way. In June we proceeded to dig an open tunnel toward the fort for the purpose of mining. A car loaded high with cotton bales was pushed in front to protect the diggers, and the tunnel or trench was covered as we proceeded to protect us from the Confederate fire. Finally we pushed the tunnel under the fort and made ready for exploding the mines, and our brigade made ready for the charge."

"The mines were exploded. The fort and all the men in it seemed to go into the air, and the Twentieth Illinois and other regiments rushed into the gap. As we climbed over the broken embankment three men who had been blown up with the fort came down. Two of these were white men, and they were dead. The other, a colored man, came down with a mass of debris, but he was living. When the boys dug him out, they asked him how in the world he came to be in the fort. The frightened dork explained that he was the servant of one of the leading officers and that he had just carried to his master his dinner when the explosion came."

"He went on to say: 'Dat is so for a fact. I came in just in time to be blowed up. I was standin by de side of de captain when there came a roarin an tremblin, an I felt myself goin up. In a little while I started down, an I met de captain comin up, but we didn't speak. He was goin up head first an I was comin down head first. I struck mighty hard, but here I is, thank de Lord an de Yankees!' I suppose that if any one would ask that dork to describe the siege of Vicksburg he would tell of his own mishap at the blowing up of Fort Hill."—Chicago Inter Ocean.

## A Persian Soldier's Conundrum.

The Rev. Samuel Graham Wilson, M. A., author of "Persian Life and Customs," is a missionary who has lived in the land he writes about for more than 30 years. To show that the Persian peasant is not devoid of humor, the doctor tells the following experience:

"A soldier was an attaché of a royal household, and, besides soldiering, he had to write poems and tell conundrums and improvise puzzles. One day, after not having been paid for either military or other duties, he said to his master: 'I have a conundrum, your excellency.'"

"What is it?"

"Tell me what it is which has a name but no existence?"

"The master thought for some time and then exclaimed: 'I give it up. Now tell me the answer.'"

"My salary," the peasant groaned, dropping on his knees for daring to be so bold."—Saturday Evening Post.

## Sheep as Beasts of Burden.

In the northern part of India sheep are put to a use unthought of in European or American countries. They are made to serve as beasts of burden. The mountain paths along the foothills of the Himalayas are so precipitous that the sheep, more surefooted than larger beasts, are preferred as burden carriers. The load for each sheep is from 16 to 20 pounds. The sheep are driven from village to village, with the wool still growing, and in each town the farmer shears as much wool as he can sell there and loads the sheep with the grain which he receives in exchange. After his flock has been sheared he turns it homeward, each sheep having on its back a small bag containing the purchased grain."

## When the Band Doesn't Play On.

One of the queer things of a great procession is that the band always ceases to play just before it passes you, no matter what your location may be.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

A woman who has spent a good deal of time in Japan says that she has often kept cut flowers for an abnormally long period by burning their stems with a piece of wood."

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