

✱ A DAUGHTER OF JUDAS. ✱

By the Author of "Sir Lionel's Wife," "The Great Moreland Tragedy," Etc.

CONTINUED.
CHAPTER XXIX.
THE SUCCESS OF IT.

An hour later Mr. Tiptaft had taken his departure, Sir Patrick arrived at The Towers.

He found all the ladies of the family in the drawing-room. Marie a shade paler than usual, and very busy with her embroidery-frame.

He took a seat opposite to her, and watching her as she worked, came to a conclusion on a knotty point, which had been agitating his mind during the last few days.

The point was, whether or not he ought to ask her to be his wife; and he now came to the conclusion that he certainly would do so.

He could not own that he was deeply attached to her.

He had never seen a girl whom he could so gladly have made his wife.

It seemed to him, as he sat watching her at her frame, that a figure inclining to embonpoint, large blue eyes, and reddish-brown hair, constituted exactly those charms he most admired in woman.

Marie's smile was very frank and pleasant, and she had smiled so often on Sir Patrick, that it was small wonder the honest gentleman loved her.

The only possible bar to marriage lay, to his mind, in his poverty and her wealth.

Had he been richer, or she poorer, he would have not hesitated a single moment; and even as it was, he came at last to the sensible opinion that if they truly loved each other, and were fitted to make each other happy, it did not perhaps greatly matter on which side the money lay.

Sir Gerald had declared, often and often, that Marie did care for him; and this afternoon Sir Patrick, relying more on his friend's judgment than on his own observation, decided to put the question to the test.

He would ask Miss Marie, in plain words, whether she would be Lady Donovan.

The opportunity was soon given him, for Miss Muggleton and her two younger daughters presently disappeared from the drawing-room.

They went quietly away, one by one, in the most natural manner in the world, all murmuring the most plausible pretext; and Sir Patrick was left alone with the lady of his heart.

He drew his chair nearer to her, and leaned, with interest, over her embroidery-frame, charmed to observe how the lilacs and roses were formed under her fair hand.

"I came up to say good-bye, Miss Marie," he began; "but it's a word I don't like."

"I don't think many people do, Sir Patrick. However, the best of friends must part."

"Yes; but they may hope to meet again." It isn't very likely that we shall," said the young lady, carelessly. "Mamma hates the sea, and never goes to Ireland."

"I wasn't thinking of it in that way," said Sir Patrick, simply. "I thought I might, perhaps, see you again in England. I'm not going back to Ireland for good, you know—only on business."

"So I understand. Very important and private business, isn't it, Sir Patrick?"

Miss Muggleton could not refrain from letting fly this little shaft.

And, as she discharged it, she raised her face from her embroidery, and looked full at Sir Patrick.

Now, as the malignant Fates would have it, the business on which the baronet was being summoned to Ireland was of a particularly private and delicate nature—a something connected with the mortgages on his estate.

Accordingly, when Marie made that remark, with that intent and searching look, he changed colour just a little, and his honest blue eyes fell.

This was only natural, for he thought she had heard of his embarrassments, and wished him to know she had.

She, noticing that sudden change of countenance, of course felt still further convinced that Mr. Tiptaft's information was only too true.

A moment they sat in silence, then Sir Patrick leaned forward, and laid his hand on Marie's blump white one as it rested on the embroidery-frame.

"Miss Marie, I wonder if I should get a welcome from you if I were to come back to England?"

She drew her hand away, saying, in a coldly careless tone—

"I am sure you would. All your friends here would be glad to see you, I imagine." Perhaps her tone was even colder than she had meant to make it.

At any rate, it sounded quite icy in the ears of Sir Patrick, and he thought—

"That's quite enough! There's no need for me to make a fool of myself. Sir Gerald was wrong. She doesn't care for me excepting as a friend. She sees what I'm after, and wants to nip it in the bud."

Acting under this impression, he adroitly turned the conversation into other channels; and in less than ten minutes, had said farewell to the entire Muggleton family, with the firm conviction that he should never see any of them again.

It cost him honest, affectionate heart a pang to think this, for he did sincerely love Marie Muggleton; but he never for a moment wavered in his purpose.

If the girl did not love him he would not seek to win her.

He would see to his business in Ireland

then he would be off to Africa, or Australia—it did not matter which.

Poor Marie watched him depart, with outward calmness, but with a terrible sinking at her heart.

She had so liked him; she had felt so sure he meant to ask her to be his wife; and now her sweet dreams were all over, and the reality—dull and grey, and almost unbearable—stretched drearily before her.

When he had placed his hand on hers, and asked her whether she would give him a welcome back, her pulses had thrilled wildly; and she had all but answered as he desired.

But Marie was a girl of spirit; and her pride had been thoroughly aroused by that announcement of Mr. Tiptaft's.

She thought it showed clearly that Sir Patrick had either been simply amusing himself with her, or was tempted to break with the other young lady, and propose to her—Marie—for the sake of her large fortune.

Either of these suppositions was dreadful to her, and hence that coldly uttered reply, and that immediate withdrawal of her hand.

"My dear," said Mrs. Muggleton, looking anxiously at her, "was there nothing settled? Did he say nothing?"

"Nothing, mamma," said the poor girl with a half-sob.

Then with a sudden burst of self-reproach, she added, vehemently—

"I was a fool to think he would!"

Her two sisters looked at her in pitying silence.

Their own love affairs were progressing satisfactorily.

It seemed a thousand pities that she was not to be happy too.

"Don't talk about it, please!" she said hurriedly. "I—I would rather you didn't. I must tell you one thing, though. Before he came this afternoon, I knew he wouldn't speak. I had found out something about him. But, oh! please don't talk about it, because it was told me in confidence. He is engaged to a lady in Ireland."

And then, unable to say any more, or to endure any questioning, the poor girl ran from the room, and went up to her own, where she burst into an agony of tears.

"Then I must say he has behaved abominably!" exclaimed Mrs. Muggleton, as she had recovered from her surprise sufficiently to find breathe to speak. "Abominably! I couldn't have believed it of him. I'm sure his attentions have been most marked. I don't know whatever your father will say when he hears of this!"

CHAPTER XXX.

MISS MUGGLETON PROMISES TO AGAIN BE AN ANGEL OF MERCY.

Soon after breakfast the next morning, Mr. Tiptaft dressed himself with unusual care, and prepared to go out.

He wore his best and blackest suit; his hat was wide brimmed; his linen of immaculate gloss and whiteness.

He looked the very personification of a comfortable, self-satisfied churchman.

He longed to go to The Towers, and discover for himself how Sir Patrick had sped with his wooing; but he hadn't quite courage enough for this.

He deemed it might be advisable to first discover whether Sir Patrick had gone away.

Fortune favoured him; for, scarcely had he emerged from the rectory-gates before he met one of Sir Gerald's grooms.

The man was his own parishioner, and touched his hat with all due respect.

Mr. Tiptaft gave him a gracious nod, and a "Good morning, Wilson," and passed on; then, with a pretence of suddenly remembering something, called the man back.

"Any news of Sir Gerald, Wilson?"

"No, sir, none as I know on."

"Lady Ruth, is quite well, I hope?"

"Yes, sir. Any message to her ladyship?"

Mr. Tiptaft mused.

"No; I think not. Oh! by-the-by, Sir Patrick Donovan is still at the Court, I suppose?"

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"No, sir, he isn't. He left last night. I drove him down to the station to catch the last train."

"Oh, indeed! I wasn't aware he was likely to go away so soon. But he is coming back, perhaps?"

"No, sir, he isn't, for I made free to say to him, at the station, that I hoped we might soon see him again, and he said, 'You're not likely to do that, Wilson, for I leave Ireland next week for Africa and the saints alone know when I shall come back.' Those were his very words, sir; and sorry I was to hear him say 'em, for a nicer gentleman never trod in shot-leather. So free and genial like; I'm sure I thought nothing a trouble I had to do for him."

"A very right and proper feeling on your part, Wilson," said Mr. Tiptaft, with gentle condescension. "I trust you never will think much of trouble in the pursuance of your duty. I'm afraid you are not quite as regular in your attendance at church as you might be, or—"

"Well, you see them 'osses require a deal of attention, sir!" said the man apologetically.

For the reverend gentleman, personally, he has a great contempt; but, nevertheless he had all the bucolic reverence for 'the cloth,' and, therefore, listened, with outward respect, to Mr. Tiptaft's admonitions.

"I was about to observe," proceeded the rector, with a look of dignified rebuke at being interrupted, "that, if you came regularly to church, you would learn not to be a respecter of persons. It is an excellent lesson, and one you would do well to lay to heart. I hope you will think about it, Wilson. Good morning!"

"I don't know as anything would make me a respecter of the likes of him," said the groom to himself, as he looked after the rector's retreating figure. "Sir Patrick's worth a dozen on him."

Mr. Tiptaft, meanwhile, was walking on with a very pleasurable feeling of complacency and self-satisfaction.

It was clear that his little scheme had succeeded admirably.

Sir Patrick had departed, leaving the field open to him; and now, all he had to do was to catch the fair Marie's affections in the rebound.

Again the Fates favoured him, for, as he passed through a shady lane near The Towers, he caught sight of the young lady herself, leaning against a stile, in a very pensive attitude.

Her face was pale, and her eye not quite so bright as usual.

Mr. Tiptaft's blandly uttered "Good morning, Miss Marie!" made her look round with a little start.

She put out her hand, faintly smiling. "Good morning Mr. Tiptaft. I didn't hear you come up. I was thinking 'Are you quite well this morning?'"

She flushed slightly.

"Not very well. I have a wretched headache."

This was true enough, for the poor girl had spent the greater part of the night in weeping over the defection of her Irish lover, whose gay blue eyes and mellow voice had wrought such havoc with her heart.

"I am grieved—truly grieved," said Mr. Tiptaft, with a look of gentle sympathy. "The moment I saw you, I thought you must be indisposed. Your face is usually as bright as a ray of sunshine; but today you are quite pale."

"Yes; headaches always do make me look pale," said Marie, listlessly.

She couldn't bear that her altered looks should be attributed to the departure of Sir Patrick.

By this time they were walking on together.

"I visited poor Sarah Bland yesterday," began Mr. Tiptaft softly. "She was grieved because you had not been to see her lately."

"Was she? Oh, I'm sure I'm very sorry! I've been busy of late; but I'll certainly go to see poor Sarah as soon as I can."

The reverend gentleman sighed, and his sigh was so very heavy that Miss Muggleton could not but ask what was amiss.

"I was regretting, Miss Marie—selfishly I am afraid—that the duties of your high position keep you, in a measure, from ministering to the sick and poor. You were an angel of light to my people when you came among them."

It is pleasant to be called an angel, especially when one has been scorned and slighted.

Poor Marie coloured a little as she told Mr. Tiptaft she should certainly endeavor to devote more time to visiting among his parishioners than she had done lately.

"If you only knew how they love you! A visit from you, to those poor souls, like a draught of cold water to those who are parched with thirst," said Mr. Tiptaft, with a burst of something like his pulpit eloquence. "And for myself—may I confess it, Miss Marie?—the very sight of you is a stimulus to exertion. When I enter a cottage, and see you sitting there, with your bright smile, I feel as though I am brought face to face with the sunshine. I am refreshed by it; I am better able to go on with my humble duties."

"Oh, Mr. Tiptaft, I'm sure you are too good to require any encouragement of that kind from me."

"Too good? Ah, Miss Marie, it only you know how unworthy I am of such praise! Poor human nature is so prone to fall! How humiliated should I be, if you were to know all my faults and failings!"

This was perfectly true; but the reverend gentleman said it with a look of such serene humility, that Marie Muggleton simply thought what a devout man he was—so unconscious of his own goodness, so humble minded.

"And you will continue to be an angel of mercy to my poor? he questioned, softly, with a tender look."

"Oh, yes; certainly I will! I am ashamed to think how much I have neglected them."

"My dear Miss Marie, you must not re-



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proach yourself. I have never, in all my life, known a young lady who had so true a sense of her responsibilities, or who rose so nobly to them. Ah! if there were more like you, a clergyman's duties would be light indeed, and his life would be a happy one."

All this was very soothing to poor Marie's wounded spirit.

If Sir Patrick did not appreciate her, there was someone who did.

She resolved within herself, that she would visit among Mr. Tiptaft's poor with redoubled zeal.

Many a young lady has made similar resolutions under a severe heart-disappointment especially if she numbers among her friends a good-looking, unmarried parson.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LOVE IS STILL THE LORD OF ALL.

The September afternoon was very warm—so warm that Kate Lisle and Vi Muggleton were glad to find a shady place and there sit with their fancy-work in their white fingers.

It was a very charming spot they had found on a pleasant bank, by the side of a shining river, three or four old willow trees lending them the needful shade.

The two girls made a pretty enough picture, sitting there, in their dainty cambric dresses, with their white fingers glancing in and out of their work, and the sunbeams on their hair.

"Vi, do you know how long I have been here?" asked Kate.

"Oh, not long!—not half long enough, at any rate. I do so enjoy having you, Kate. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes; and I enjoy being with you; but Vi, I must go home soon now—next week at the latest. Think of aunt. She will be wanting me."

"Well, I've one consolation," said Vi, darting a mischievous glance at her friend. "If you go, you'll soon come back—and for good, too."

"Vi!"

"Oh! it's all well to say 'Vi!' in that innocent fashion; but you know what I mean. Of course we all know you're going to Beech Royal!"

"Oh, Vi, what nonsense!"

But Kate flushed rosy red, and a wonderful light stole into her lovely eyes.

"Now, Kate, don't be a hypocrite. I always thought you were so frank and true. You know he cares for you."

"Vi, I give you my word of honor he has never spoken to me a single word of love!"

"There's no need for words when he looks as he does. Now, Kate, be honest. Tell me whether you wouldn't be fearfully disappointed if he were to let you go away without speaking?"

"I shall tell you no such thing!" said Kate, laughing through her blushes, and throwing a handful of grass at her saucy friend. "You're perfectly abominable, Vi. I shall begin to tease you about Harry Rolleston."

"You're perfectly welcome," returned Vi, coolly.

"What does that mean, I wonder? Now, Vi, tell me, seriously—is there anything between you and him?"

"There's a great deal of love, if that's what you mean," said Vi, with the utmost possible composure. "I don't mind telling you Kate, that I worship the very ground he treads on. Yes, I do; and I'm not ashamed owning it. He's worthy of my love—of any girl's—yes, he is, my dear, good, noble darling!"

And Vi's pretty face flushed a delicious rose color, while her eyes sparkled with tender enthusiasm.

"Dear Vi! I love to hear you speak like that!" whispered Kate, moving nearer to her, and stealing her arm round her waist.

"Kate, I don't think any girl ought to be ashamed of owning her love when the man is worthy of it, and when it is returned. But you know dear, it won't be all smooth sailing for Harry and me."

"What do you mean?"

"Why mamma is so dreadfully opposed to him. Sometimes I think she never will give way. And then, you see, Harry is so proud; he can't bear the thought of marrying me against her wish. It's being so poor that troubles him. Mamma is always dropping hints about young men that come after girls for the sake of their money; and, of course, Harry knows what that means."

"If he were rich, or if he were poor, he wouldn't mind any amount of opposition. He says he knows he could win his way at last; but, as it is, it's very hard on him, poor fellow! If he didn't love me dearly, I don't think he could bear it."

"Mamma is really very cruel sometimes. I wonder whether she ever remembers the days when she was young, and in love herself? I suppose she wouldn't have liked anybody to speak unkindly of papa."

Kate, with difficulty, repressed a smile. The thought of the stout, red-faced millionaire as a wooer tickled her sense of humour.

She wondered whether he had met with difficulties—whether hard-hearted parents had frowned upon him—and how he had borne the pangs of disappointed love.

"But your father isn't opposed to Harry, Vi!" she said, consolingly.

"No; papa is a darling. Harry knows he has his goodwill. It's only mamma we have to mind. Oh, Kate, do you know, I've often wished, lately, that papa wasn't rich; I've wished he might lose all his money, and be quite a poor man again! Then they would know Harry loves me for myself alone."

If Vi had only known it, that wish of hers might have been regarded as prophetic.

The time was coming when she would have occasion to recall it something like dismay.

After this there was silence between the two girls.

Their fingers were busy with their work, and their thoughts were with their lovers—for John Morewood was Kate Lisle's lover, although, as she had honestly said, he had never spoken to her a single word of love.

Presently the silence was broken by the barking of a dog, and, in a moment or two a great boarhound came through the trees, gave a short, glad bark at sight of the two girls, and then looked back, as though eagerly waiting for someone to come on.

A rosy flush rose to Kate's cheek, for the dog belonged to Morewood.

The next moment he himself came in sight; and then it was Vi's turn to blush prettily, for with him was Harry Rolleston.

The two men threw themselves on the grass, each at the feet of the girl he loved.

And very happy those four were by the side of the murmuring water, the willow trees casting pleasant shadows across the sunshine, the great dog keeping guard, ready to warn them of the approach of any intruder.

To be continued.

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Miss Mobile: "Well, Martha, how is your husband now?"

Martha: "Po'ly, miss; po'ly; he's got that exclamation rheumatism."

Miss Mobile: "You mean inflammatory rheumatism, Martha; 'exclamation' is to cry out."

Martha (with solemn conviction): "That's it, mum! that's it! He don't do nothin' but holler!"

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