

LOVE THE CONQUEROR.

Love, if life should end to-night,
How short our life would seem!
One little flash of summer light;
One brief and passionate dream,
One sweet, sad roses on the wall,
Or blue-bells in the lane.
Then, love, the end, the end of all—
Ay, buds might well, and leaves might fall,
But not for us again!

The stream we used to watch and love
Would never onward flow;
From the dark pines the gray wood-dove
Would call—we should not know.
Ah! not for us the pines would wave,
For us no stream would run;
We should be silent in the grave,
Unable even to howl and weep.
One little glimpse of sun!

Yet is not this a somber view?
Of life and all it brings?
Thank Heaven, the bright waves still are blue,
And oft before love's conquering song
Death's voice sinks quite away;
For life is short, but love is long,
And death is fiercer, but love is strong.
And Love shall win the day!

—G. Barlow, in *Pageant of Life*.

MIRIAM.

The Romance of Heatherleigh Hall.

By MANDA L. CROCKER.

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CHAPTER XXII.—CONTINUED.

"When are you going back?" he ventured, eyeing the toe of his neatly polished boot, and, doubtless, hoping that I had not read his secret.

"In a few days," I answered; "Miriam sent me to the Hall on an errand, and that is why I am here. I came to visit friends elsewhere. But did you wish to send word to your cousin, or were you contemplating a trip?"

He looked at me for a moment as if my words had put a new idea in his head. Then he said: "If you will wait, madame, I will write a note, providing you will be kind enough to give it her; that is—" and he hesitated, "if she still remembers me!"

I looked at him. How could any one forget that face, I thought. Then I said: "Oh! certainly, she remembers you, Mr. Percival. I have heard her speak of you quite often, and I know she would be glad to get a line from you."

He raised his eyes once more, and a slight flush came over his face which left it almost pallid, while I fancied a soul-mist dimming those glorious eyes. He grew visibly agitated, but calming himself with an effort he said: "If you will please to sit down on this seat and wait for me I will indite a few lines to my cousin Miriam."

I sat down on the rustic seat, old and moss-grown, while he drew forth pencil and pocket diary from an inner pocket of his coat, and tearing a leaf from the book, wrote to Miriam.

I watched him with a curious interest. Would Miriam be glad to get this letter? I was sure it would be a letter into whose short length would be crowded the passionate thoughts of years. I believed that Miriam would walk from her morbid, helpless grief after its perusal, and I watched the firm, shaped hand trace words I was positive were of poetic fire with much the same feelings of gladness that one sees a son prepared which is to give great relief to a suffering friend.

I had made up my mind, and accordingly I thought best not to mention my meeting Allan Percival in the park to Peggy or Annell. They, to say the least, would be curious, and perhaps might ask questions which I could not answer and do justice to the confidence reposed in me.

So, trusting that they had not seen Allan, I thrust the letter to Miriam in my pocket and entered the house. They had not seen Allan, and I counted myself lucky in escaping all chance of being interrogated, for my visitor of the park had enjoyed secrecy upon me in the matter of his identity and his message to Miriam.

Said he: "Keep this meeting here—that is, the identity of the individual you chanced to meet—a profound secret as far as this side the water is concerned. I ventured here because it was my father's home until driven from it," and his eyes took on an angry, agonized gleam which made me shudder in spite of myself. "All here, too, is a Percival," I thought, and the look in his eyes reminded me of Miriam.

"I presume," he began, after a pause, "I ought never to have come here; it fills my soul with hate to look about me and remember my father's story, and also that of

I WATCHED HIM WITH A CURIOUS INTEREST. Cousin Miriam. But, after all, it is quite lucky for me, because I have met you, her friend, by coming."

His face speedily regained its former pleasant expression and a yearning hope supplanted the dark look of revenge which had so awed me.

"Yes," I replied, "it is a stroke of Providence: you were to meet me and I am to carry your message to your cousin."

"Do you believe in that theory?" he asked, an odd, puzzled look on his face.

"Certainly I do," I answered, "and you will, too, by and by."

"I am almost converted to your doctrine now," he laughed.

Then, after wishing me "bon voyage" and reiterating his desire that Miriam should get the letter from my hands only, he lifted his hat and bade me good-bye again and walked away toward what used to be the deer park, but now a rather neglected close.

One morning not long after this decidedly romantic interview in the old, deserted Heatherleigh grounds I found myself ready to leave the Hall.

Peggy, who has either grown tired of coaxing me to prolong my visit or presumed further pressing was useless, which indeed would have been, brought Miriam's portrait from the gallery, and, wrapping it carefully, with many a caress and crooning word of endearment, gave it into my care.

I considered this quite a feat—to get possession of a portrait from this old Hall, and

showered my unfeigned thanks on Peggy's devoted head in consequence.

"I will do all in my power to get her to return, if only for a year's visit," I promised the two aged servants at my leave-taking, and intend to keep my promise good. Not for worlds would I prove false to those old Irish dwellers at Heatherleigh by not trying to persuade Miriam to come back, if for nothing else than to see them.

Hark! what is that? Oh, it is the tingling ailing of the bell for luncheon, and Gladys expects my cousin's presence in the pleasant little breakfast-room shortly.

Cousin Gladys' luncheons are something famous for a suburban cottage, with their delicious cake and fruit arrangement, together with their smattering of cold meats, and flanked with spiced wines.

She is in high glee this week, for we are to take a little run up into the dear old Cotswold hills. Gladys' and I, and she is chirrup as bird in consequence.

I shall enjoy the trip, to be sure, but the secret of Allan's letter and the pleasant knowledge of having met him eclipse all the happy anticipation I might feel in a run among the Cotswold hills. I find myself lost in speculation as to what Miriam will do and say when I give Allan's letter into her hands and tell her I met him accidentally—not providentially—at Heatherleigh.

With such weighty secrets in my possession from both sides of the water, no wonder I am beginning to feel myself a person of uncommon importance. And the letter and portrait in my keeping, either of which is worth a ransom to the owner, I presume, make me feel more like an ambassador than simply a guest. It seems to me that my coming to see Gladys has lost its identity—become, as it were, a secondary object or excuse for the grander possibilities.

Ah! here comes Gladys. I expected as much. I have kept her waiting too long for her busy, bustling nature, and she has come to see if I have gone to sleep in this cozy nook or turned a deaf ear to her luncheon bell.

A week later finds me making ready for the return voyage.

CHAPTER XXIII.

We have been having an outing, Gladys and I. We have taken that little run up the Thames for which we were booked some time.

Gladys, having some friends in London, and wishing to see them also, we spent a couple of days there. From there we started for the delightful country trip. It would have been more to my liking to have gone in midsummer, but the summer was past, the opportunity had gone by, and the upper Thames had been left until now.

No matter; we found ourselves at the Great Western Paddington station one fine morning, with lunch-hamper in hand. Gladys remembers the lunch item, if nothing else, en route for Taplow.

Away we roll out of the big city and across the quiet peacefulness of a beautiful stretch of country. The fields, however, were unfortunately rather brown and bare, but were too late in the season for field daisies or bright and blooming hedge rows. It seemed to me a kind of solemn, quiet loneliness pervaded the landscape, and I ceased to look from my compartment and shut my eyes to the outside glimpses of the real world, busying myself in delving into the impossible, and—perhaps—possible, ideal world of my own.

An hour's ride brought us to our destination by rail.

From Maidenhead we were to go by boat to Marlowe. There a friend meets us, and we go winding away across the country again to Oxford—renowned old Oxford, and from there to a little nook in the hills miles further on: Gladys' old home, you know.

I do not know that I have time to tell you of all the beautiful landscapes, wooded parks, soft, hazy meadow stretches, still green and inviting, and the thousand other lovely visions which will be green in memory for many a long day. But I wish to say that our ride on the Thames from Maidenhead to Marlowe was one round of delightful surprises and enjoyable diversion. There are many picturesque scenes on the banks of this old, much-sung, much-painted river. With its numerous locks, weirs, lovely old mills and hospitable inns, with its picturesque scenery of wooded heights and handsome and ivy-wreathed, ivy-crowned churches and country seats, "old Father Thames" is remembered as a very genial friend.

No wonder the artist raves; no wonder the poet strikes his sweetest, grandest numbers along his banks. No wonder, I say, no wonder!

Oxford being on the flow of the Thames also, I regretted very much that we had not had time to boat it further; but necessity knows no compromise with inclination, and Gladys must go by another route.

Days and days it would have taken us, Gladys said, to have gone up the river to Oxford, and of course it would, when we come to take into consideration the classic windings of the stream.

Well, I am sure I missed a great deal of beauty and loveliness, but it can not be helped now, nor could it have been.

Gladys' old home nestles in a bright little nook among the hills, and a beautiful little country residence it is, situated on the banks of the Thames, but not the great river we left behind us at Marlowe, or Oxford, for instance.

No; a quiet, silvery, unpretentious flow just below the garden, where we stood and watched birds of migration pass over our heads in the gray of the evening light, while the brisk breeze went by and sighed itself to death among the hills.

The house itself is also ivy-wreathed—every thing is ivy-wreathed, or ivy-crowned, it seems to me, in merrie old England—as well as the more pretentious neighboring residences; a low-caved, many-gabled affair, with solid masonry and heavy wooden shutters. A little, wood-paneled park and an antiquated-looking summer-house at the back, where Gladys and I found rich purple clusters hanging invitingly along the rafters of a broken-down trellis belonging thereto.

In the front a pretty, well-kept garden, where, doubtless, in summer the display of old-fashioned flowers was something novel for an American to behold. But in the remains of its former glory I took but little satisfaction, although the display of great clumps of thrifty marigolds and crimson beds of late geraniums made it a warm, rich-looking picture.

But the best part of the visit there to remember, to my mind, was the warm welcome we received from the matronly-looking English lady in charge.

"So glad to have you come," she said, smoothing out her apron of blue and white checked linen and handing us each a chair while she talked.

In five minutes' time I felt perfectly "at home" at Spring Brook, so named from a clear, gushing fountain bubbling down over mossy bowlders near the house.

"Hi ham so very busy in the kitchen ladies, hand if you wouldn't mind to—sit with me there, why, Hi could wish with you to much better advantage," she said, after a little, with a bridle of her head and a sort of apologizing smile.

Certainly we would sit with her there, and forthwith we sat and enjoyed her society while she baked and finished to a turn her bread and a couple of spring

chickens meant for us. She kept no help, so she found it necessary to be at the helm, company or no company. And such a bright, genial hostess one hardly ever meets as did the honors of Spring Brook farm.

And now, how pleasant the recollection of those sunny hours chatted away beneath the weather-beaten gables of the pleasant, deep-windowed kitchen. I can almost see myself rocking softly to and fro in the old-fashioned rush-bottom rocker, and listening to Mrs. Grey's kindly voice, or fancy myself cuddled up in the deep chintz-covered arm-chair by the window, watching her busily with her work.

But that is, too, among the past, and the twilight settling over the downs over there, and the dark, restless waters beyond, remind me that it is evening once more in the suburban Hastings.

The great arms of the windmill look very distant and hazy, like unto a ghost in the air; and I hear a few rooks chattering, and perhaps quarreling, in the elms at the back of the cottage. Gladys will soon light the lamps, and then I will feel obliged to go indoors and leave the twilight; mysterious and indistinct as it is how I love it! It puts me in mind of Joaquin Miller's rest, portrayed in his excellent poem, "The Rest of the Grave."

There Gladys has lighted up the chandelier in the rosebed of a parlor, and the soft light from the colored globes falls over a piece of statuary fair as Undine, and slants like a halo through the glass doors this side. And I can see from where I sit, here in the delicious, shadowy night, cousin fitting about the room, and note the sweep of her crimson gown. She is trying to be glad and happy to-night, for I am to start for home to-morrow, and she does not desire to leave

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