

THE FATAL MISTAKE.

By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.

CHAPTER I.

"And yet," said Gladie Beaton to herself, "wise people tell us that there is a doctrine of compensation by which all things are made equal. I should like to see any wise man who would tell me that I am as happy, as prosperous, as beloved as Lenore Audley."

The girl musing stood at the open French window of a beautifully furnished drawing room. On a couch at the end of the room lay a lady sleeping, with an expression of angelic patience on what had been a beautiful face; the blinds were drawn to shut out the sunlight. On a table by her side stood every luxury that love could procure—a plate of grapes, a ripe peach, books periodicals, flowers. The hands of the sleeping woman were folded in that most pitiful and helpless fashion which tells that one is almost blind. The girl at the open window had been reading to her, and, finding her asleep, had gone to look for the first amusement which offered itself. From the window she saw one of the prettiest pictures that even a poet could dream.

A beautiful girl, with a figure graceful and perfect, was standing on the lawn—a girl who, from the midst of a thousand others, would rivet the eyes and attention; a fine, supple figure, full of grand, free grace, with a frank, brave courage; limbs that might have made a sculptor's study; a beautiful face, fair and sweet, yet full of fire and courage—the face of a dauntless woman, whose resources would be endless. Looking at her, one thought, almost involuntarily, of the great queens whose names live in legend and song.

She was standing near a large acacia tree, the white blossoms of which she shook from time to time from her dress and her bright hair. Two gentlemen were with her, and at first sight you would have dubbed one knight, the other poet. Cyril Leslie Vernon, a tall, dark man, with a proud, yet frank face, a courtly manner, a knightly figure, powerful and well built, stood on her right hand. Austin Chandos, on whose spiritual face poet was written, stood on her left. She looked from one to the other with a laughing light in her lovely eyes.

"My knight and my poet," she said, "you will flatter me until I believe myself really a queen. Who says I am like Diane, who is a dream of loveliness?"

"I say it," replied Cyril Vernon, raising his cap and bowing.

"Who says I am like the queen, whom to look at was to listen to music, and to love was madness?"

"I say so," replied Austin Chandos, bowing low.

The sweet, sunny laugh rang out in the sunlit air.

"I must thank you both, gentlemen," said the cheerful voice. "You compare me to heroines of every kind and degree—to queens, whose very souls were dark with guilt, and to sirens who by songs lured men to death. I ought to be more flattered than I am."

The laughter died away in her face, and a light came over it, as she raised her head proudly and said:

"There's only one title that pleases me, and it is 'a soldier's daughter.' I am prouder of being Col. John Audley's daughter than I should be of being crowned sovereign of the British Isles and India."

"Do you remember anything of India?" asked Austin, the poet.

"Not very much. At times a dream comes to me of fierce sunshine and huge trees, of dark figures, with quiet, shy movements, of sitting under the shade, listening to the military band, my fast clasp in my father's."

"India can have no very pleasant memories for you," said Cyril, the knight.

The beautiful face grew pale and sad.

"No, do not speak of it. To other people it is all a thing of the past, to me it is horribly real. We lived at Cawnpore; we had a lovely house there; it was filled with scarlet flowers. I have the sole of the scene before me now. There's a fierce clamor—a wild, terrible fit. My father rushed into the room, breathless, sword in hand. My mother clasped me to her. I heard nothing but the clash of swords, the cries of mother and aunt, my father's deep ringing as he called them dastards, a woman and child. I, who speak so safe in the heart of this green, I saw my pretty, girlish aunt killed; I saw my father carried off; and I left, so they told me, with my mother dead. My father was shot that day, fighting to the last moment for English ladies and children who were defenseless."

"My voice rang out, clear as the sound of a clarion."

"A nobler soldier ever served England, in India, than my father, John Audley; my one great pride is that I am his child. My mother's life and mine were saved by Sergt. Maj. Henry Beaton; he helped us safely off to England; and my mother brought his daughter, Gladie, back with her. Both her parents were subsequently killed, and she has been our adopted child and sister ever since, and will be while we live; the old ties are strong."

"What a childhood!" said Austin, the poet; "I do not like to think of it."

"Yes, it was different to the childhood

of little English girls, who seem to me to live among flowers and kind words. One thing often recurs to me; we brought with us an old Indian ayah, who had been my nurse; she used to open my hand and look into it. 'Warfare and bloodshed,' she would say, 'when the line of life began—and, bloodshed again—what a fate for little missy!'

"That is all nonsense," said Cyril, the knight. "I do not believe in any of those superstitions fancies."

"I am sorry to say that I do," said Austin Chandos. "I have known more than one of those old weird prophecies to come true."

Lenore laughed.

"My old ayah may have been right," she said; "and if that is the case, the wonderful events of my life are not over yet. Gladie is coming."

The girl standing at the window had stepped suddenly on to the lawn, and was coming toward them.

"Is mamma awake?" asked Lenore.

"Yes; but she wished to be alone, so told me to join you."

The gentlemen bowed; but there was no great expression of delight on their faces.

"I am glad you have come, Gladie," said Lenore. "These gentlemen are talking of science that verges on the magic art. Do you believe in telling fortunes?"

"No," said Gladie. "I believe in no other fortune save that which every man and woman makes for him or herself."

Her voice was clear and musical, but there was something in it not pleasant to a keen listener—something which made one look again at her face.

"I am inclined to the same opinion," said Lenore. "One of our best writers has expressed that well. There is no fate but that which the strong hands of a man carve out for himself."

"Those are noble words," said Cyril. But the poet looked doubtful.

"Shall we go down to the riverside?" asked Lenore. "We shall have time to walk there and back before mamma wants us."

It was worthy of notice that neither of the gentlemen seemed very anxious that Miss Beaton should accompany them. Neither of them moved from Lenore's side, yet each gave the other a glance which said plainly: "Why are you not polite enough to walk with Miss Beaton?"

Lenore quickly appreciated the situation. She turned round.

"Gladie," she said, "walk with me."

And the gentlemen were punished, like two naughty schoolboys, by having to walk together.

"This is quite a monopoly, ladies," said Cyril, the knight. "I do not find Mr. Austin Chandos a very lively companion."

"Do you not?" said Lenore. "Perhaps Miss Beaton will prove more entertaining company for you. Mr. Chandos, let me see if that is the truth or a libel."

The face of Mr. Chandos lighted up with wonderful brightness as he took his place by Lenore's side, and they talked gayly. He fancied that was a decided matter of preference on her side for him.

Gladie Beaton lingered in crossing the path that led down to the river, while Cyril evidently wished to remain as near as possible to Lenore—he liked to catch the chime of sunny laughter, the ring of her gay words.

"I am afraid you are disappointed," she said. "You came to see Miss Audley, and now you have to put up with me."

"I am very fortunate," he said, "to have the pleasure of talking to you, Miss Beaton."

"But it was Miss Audley you came to see," she said; and he wondered a little at the persistence in her tone. He did not see the keen anxiety in her face as she watched his.

"Certainly I came to see Miss Audley, and I met Mr. Chandos, bent on the same errand; but because a man sets out with only one pleasure in view, that is no reason why he should not enjoy two."

Her face cleared a little.

"If it really be a pleasure," she said, doubtfully.

"How can it be otherwise?" he asked, with great politeness; but the dark eyes, watching him so keenly, saw that while he talked to her, while he carefully removed every bramble from her path, he was looking at the beautiful figure in the gray trailing dress. A flush of indignation burned her face. Suddenly she stammered.

"I think I will go back to Mrs. Audley," she said; "she may want me."

Cyril said nothing; he did not press her to go or stay, but stood quietly while she decided. He bowed as she passed him, and then hastened to overtake Lenore. When she had walked on for some short distance, Gladie Beaton stood still to watch him.

"Is it fair?" she cried; "is it fair? Heaven has given her an angel's face, she has a laugh like the chime of silver bells, she has a voice like music, she has money, she has everything, and they both love her—the dark-haired one with the pale face—they both love her, and no one loves me; they worship the ground she stands on; they watch her smiles, they hang on her words; they love her—they love her."

A flush of passionate anger came to her face, her eyes grew dark, her scarlet lips trembled.

"Why should they love her and ignore me? I have beauty, I have wit, I have talent; I could do and dare anything. Why am I not loved as she is? Love or no love, I swear one thing, no matter if it takes twenty years, no matter if I do not succeed until I come to die, no matter what sin, what worry, what evil I work, no matter who suffers or what they suffer, I raise my right hand and swear that Cyril Leslie Vernon shall love me before he dies; I swear that I will trample all scruple under foot, but I will win his love! I have found out her secret. She loves Cyril Vernon the best; but she shall never have him, for I swear to win him if I lose all the world besides."

CHAPTER II.

Mrs. Audley, blinded by the discharge of a pistol in the hands of a Sepoy in India, under skilled surgical care was, after many years, quite recovering her sight.

She grew very much attached to the two cousins, whose coming was her chief amusement and delight. During the lovely, warm July days they were there continually; they had grown quite at home at the Manor House. She would sit in the comfortable invalid chair that Austin had constructed for her, while they wandered down to the river. They were sitting on the bank one evening—Lenore, Gladie, Austin and Cyril—watching the gorgeous sunset, and the red lights that fell from the western skies over the calm, deep waters.

"Did I tell you," said Austin, "that Miss Elsa Grey had returned home, and a grand fete is to be given in honor of the event?"

Lenore raised her beautiful head.

"Who is Miss Grey?" she asked.

Austin laughed.

"That question betokens great ignorance of what my uncle calls 'the county magnates,'" he replied. "Miss Elsa Grey is the only daughter and heiress of Peter, commonly called Squire Grey, of Moulesmere—a young lady educated in the first Parisian fashion."

Lenore looked profoundly indifferent, Gladie vitally interested.

"Is she beautiful, Mr. Chandos?" she asked.

"I have not seen her. Cyril and I do not seem to know her, though we often go to see the squire, and he talks of nothing but his daughter. This fete—or ball, I think it is—to introduce her to the neighborhood."

"Are you both going?" asked Gladie, and her eyes dwelt anxiously on the dark, handsome face of the man near her.

"We shall go—so will you—every one will go," replied Austin. "I expect a perfect furor for everything French after this."

"You will be disappointed," said Lenore. "I shall never imitate, but imitate—never."

"I anticipate great amusement," said Austin. "My uncle talks so incessantly of Miss Elsa Grey, that I quite expect he will give us an aunt."

Gladie's face fell.

"You do not, surely, think Sir Joyce will marry?" she asked.

"I cannot tell. I wish he would," said Austin.

"So do I," added Cyril. "I cannot imagine why he did not marry years ago."

"But," said Gladie, "if he did so you could not—pray pardon my plain speaking—you would not be his heirs."

"Then there's the jolly 'toucher.'

"S'pose it's all off up at my camp," he says with all the good humor in life. Found my groceryman sitting on the steps when I went home yesterday afternoon, and I had to put up a scrap to get by him. S'pose he's seized one of the kids for ransom to-day."

"Why don't you pay your grocery bill, then?" you ask him.

"Dern the luck. I don't know why I don't," he says, laughing all over. 'Got mixed up in a poker game last pay day—and, say, what d'ye s'pose happened? I got four jacks in a jackpot, and I just ask you, man to man, didn't it look like a pipe? Well, sir, if one o' the other fellows didn't have four kings, I hope I may never, etc. If you haven't got the sense that you came into the world with you'll cough up more or less strongly to help out this jolly ass with his groceryman. (I grieve to remark, in parentheses, and in a hushed tone, that I didn't exhibit the sense I was born with once—just once.)"

"Intricacies of the Language.

"Zee Americaine language ees one zat ees asily comprehendez, I don't zink," said the French boarder to the young man who never eats veal.

"You seem inclined to kick about it."

"Oui. I am notations making of ze leetle oddities zat I encounter in ze, vat you call orthography."

"Yes?"

"Oui. You spell s-h-o-e?"

"We do."

"And blue, b-l-u-e?"

"Exactly."

"And shoeing, s-h-o-e-i-n-g?"

"Well, what of it?"

"And bluing, b-l-u-i-n-g?"

"Well, haven't we a right to?"

"Oui. But why are you so economical as to smuggle out de leetle e in bluing and make him so conspicuous in shoeing? Ah! Zat is where I has got you!"

A Fisherman's Paradise.

The record just published of a fishing expedition in Lapland should be good reading for anglers.

The party was one of two rods, with followers.

They fished for eleven days, and secured a total of 282 salmon and 115 grilse, weighing in all nearly 5,000 pounds.

The best day's catch for one rod was thirty-three salmon and twenty-two grilse, or a total weight of 553 pounds.

It should be added that the fishing party had to wait their opportunity, for when they arrived at their destination the river was frozen, and when the thaw came there was at first

so much water for fishing.—The Globe.

SOME NEW CHAPEAUX.

Felt and Pique Hats Are Much in Favor This Season.

Felt and pique hats are much in favor. Some are rather manly in their appearance. Mme. Rejane, in Paris, has been wearing a drab felt hat quite in the hatter style, with no other trimming than a band of ribbon around the crown. Mme. Autocolski went further still; she wore a soft mauve pique hat



SOME NEW CHAPEAUX.

"Tommy, who was Joan of Arc?" asked the teacher. "Neh's wife," was Tommy's guess.

He—if she is a girl of ideas, as you say, why does she conceal them? She—She wants to get married.—Life.

Maud—Do you like to have men flatten you? Ethel—Oh, I don't mind, if they happen to be photographers.—Bar-

Good man—Do you know where little boys go that smoke cigarettes? Bad boy—Yep! Dey goes out in de woodshed.

Landlady—Isn't this a good chicken? Boarder—It may have been a good chicken morally, but physically it was a wreck.—Judge.

"I suppose you have become pretty thoroughly familiar with golf by this time." "Familiar with it? Why, sir, I think in golf.—Chicago Tribune.

A Literary Pursuit.—Hoxey—That young chap in the golf suit writes for a living. The Lady—For the magazines? Hoxey—No; mostly to his father.—Life.

Browne—Waiter, bring me a dozen oysters on the half-shell. Walter—Sorry, sah, but we's all out of shell-fish, sah, 'ceptin' nags.—Rochester Union and Advertiser.

"I wish to see some of the current magazines, please." "Current magazines? Certainly. John, show this lady the Electric Spark and the