

HER FATAL MISTAKE

By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME.

CHAPTER V.

Gladie received the news of that engagement with triumph that was yet half bewilderment. She, like Mrs. Audley, had always more than half suspected that Lenore preferred Cyril; now, she said to herself that she had been wrong—there could be no inducement except real love in this marriage; there was neither wealth nor title.

"So it was Austin all the time," she said, "and I have been wearing my life away with anxiety, thinking it was Cyril. Even if it had been—if they had been engaged twenty times over—I should have kept my vow."

May passed with its harebells and hawthorns; June came with its roses and lilies; July, with its blaze of scarlet poppies and full-blown limes. That summer the marriage was to take place, but it would be when summer was waning.

Lenore walked one morning through the Barton Woods.

Of late there had grown on her a spirit of unrest; she could not tell why or wherefore—a terrible spirit, that made the four walls of room utterly unbearable to her, that drove her out to the woods and fields, always seeking counsel from her own heart and finding none. What ailed her, what possessed her, what had gone wrong in her life?—she, who ought to have been happier than any other. On this morning the conversation had turned upon her wedding dress. Gladie was vitally interested in it, not forgetting to put in a plea about her own.

"I must have something very nice," she said. "Sir Cyril is sure to come to your wedding, Lenore; if I am your bridemaid he will be your best man, and we shall be thrown together."

A very natural speech. Lenore felt that it was so, yet it made her angry, so irritated, that she could no longer talk pleasantly to her mother about muslin and silk. The room seemed small and close; every word uttered by everybody seemed tiresome. She said to herself that she was overtired, and she must go out; yet, when she was out in the beautiful sunshine, the sense of irritation remained with her. She stood at the white-barred gate which led to the entrance of Barton Wood. She sighed as she watched a bright-winged pheasant; life was not all she had pictured it; the fancies and dreams of her girlhood were not realized.

"I seem to have missed something," she said, "and I cannot tell what I have missed."

At that moment she caught sight of a man's figure crossing the wood. Why should her face flush a hot crimson that almost pained her, then grow white as a snow drop—white even to the lips? Why should her hands tremble and her brain reel? It was Cyril; there could be no mistake. Cyril, the knight, with the soldier's erect carriage and the knightly air of dignity; Cyril, her old friend and playfellow, whom she had known as long as she had known Austin—Cyril, whom, of course, she admired very much, as did every one who knew him. What was the mist that seemed to spread out in the air between himself and her? She seemed dazed and half bewildered.

"I must have felt frightened," she said to herself in half pitiéd excuse for her own emotion. "Yet why should the sight of Cyril frighten me?"

"Lenore!" cried a cheery voice, full of deep, rich music; "Lenore!"

She was utterly unable to answer; she raised her beautiful, colorless face with something of the dauntless spirit which burned in her gallant father's breast when he faced the Sepoys' fire.

"Lenore!"

The cry was repeated, then came the crash of strong footsteps among the bracken and the fern. Then a dark, handsome face was smiling into hers—a face full of fire and passion and power; dark eyes, full of something before which her own fell.

"Lenore," he said, "how strange that I should meet you, how strange that I should find you here. I was going to the Manor House purposely to see you."

Why could she not answer him? Why should her pale face grow paler, and her hands tremble from his clasp? He looked half surprised, half amused. The man never lived yet whom feminine timidity did not flatter, or a girl's pretty coyness disarm.

"Absence has been a bad friend to me, Lenore!" he said. "Have you not one word of greeting for me? I have been away all these months, yet you have not one word when I return."

"I did not know you had returned," she said, shyly.

"I was going to say that I hardly knew it myself," he replied. "I wonder if you can guess at all why I came, Lenore?"

"I—no—I never can guess anything," she answered.

"Then I shall be compelled to tell you, and it will not be an unpleasant task; but you must be civil to me first, Lenore. Hold out that pretty white hand of yours—I remember the touch of it so well—and say that you are pleased to see me."

She held out her hand.

"I am much pleased to see you," she said.

But why did the touch of his strong fingers on her hand make her heart beat

and her whole frame tremble? She had shaken hands with him a hundred times before.

"Lenore," he cried, half impatiently, "I do not believe that you are pleased to see me."

Then she roused herself, for she heard something like pain in his voice.

"Indeed I am much pleased," she hastened to answer; "why should I be anything else? But even now you have not told me when you came, whom you have seen, or if you have heard any news."

She spoke rapidly, as though she would fain give him so much to answer that he should not have time for any ideas of his own.

"I am remiss not to have explained myself before," he said. "I tell you it was this dream of the music of the river, and your voice with it, which brought me home. I reached Eastwold late last night, so late that few of the servants were up. I rose early this morning; my mind, and brain, and heart were so full of one idea, I could not sleep; and then I have wandered about here, longing for the hour when etiquette would permit me to call at the Manor House to see you; so that I have spoken to no one except my valet and the housekeeper, not even to my dear and faithful friend Austin."

She started again, as though some keen, secret pain stirred her. He did not notice it.

"Then you have heard no news?" she said to him.

"No; there could be none which would interest me," he replied.

She could not tell how it was, but she had a keen, passionate longing for him to know at once that she was going to be married; yet she could not tell him, she did not know why or wherefore, but she could not.

So they wandered down the beautiful, shady river banks, the bright beauty of the morning beating high in their hearts, love, hope and fear thrilling like the pulse of youth.

"I have come from a long distance to say something," he said, "and now that I am here, I lack the courage to begin."

"I do not believe that you ever lacked courage for anything," she answered.

CHAPTER VI.

"Let me look at you," he said; "and see if you are what my dreams pictured you far away."

She did not raise her head, as she would once have done, with proud, petulant grace and a sharp repartee; her beautiful head dropped from him, and she spoke no word.

"Yes," he said, "you are more beautiful, Lenore, even more beautiful than my dreams had pictured you. But there is something new in your face—something I have never seen there before."

"I do not think I have changed at all," she answered. "You have been so accustomed to the Welsh faces lately, that you have forgotten what the English ones are like. Are the Welsh faces very handsome, Sir Cyril?"

"Yes; but, Lenore, I did not leave Cing-fad, all in confusion, to talk about Welsh faces—that I am quite sure."

"Probably not," she replied.

"Lenore—nay, do not look at the river, look at me. Ah, my darling, what words have I to tell you what brought me here? I have come to tell you, and I stand abashed before your innocence and goodness, before your grace and beauty abashed and silent—I want to tell you that I love you. You have turned your face from me, and I want to say how much I love you, how dear you are to me—how every hope that I have in the wide world is centered in the one longing to make you my wife."

Each word thrilled her with a keen sense of delight which half-frightened her, with a keen despair that dismayed her. What did this tumult of heart and brain mean? What had come over her? She, who never in all her life had feared the looks or words of man or woman, now would have given the world to have escaped from herself. She was frightened at herself. She was powerless to interrupt him. She knew that she must do so, that she must tell him she was to be married in a few weeks' time; but this torrent of passionate words was like sweetest poison, as soothing and as sweet; like deadliest poison, for it absorbed her senses. It seemed to her that she could sit there and listen forever to the passionate words. They lulled her into oblivion. He went on, never heeding the trance in which she had lost herself.

"I loved you, Lenore, from the moment I saw you, and my love will be as warm and true, as deep and lasting, as fresh and vivid on the day of my death as it was on; it can never alter or change, it can never grow less, or grow cold."

Her lips parted in a great tearless sob.

He went on:

"So I take your hands in mine. Nay, you must not shrink from my touch, my darling. I pledge you my faith; men love according to their nature, some warmly, some coldly, some with the very fire of impetuosity and passion; that is how I love you, my heart's darling. I could not pretend to say that I submit to your wishes, that you can take me or reject me as you please. I say you must take me, you must give me your heart, your love, your life; you must be mine, by

sweetest of claims, the dearest of ties but mine you must be. I could brook no denial; my love is my life."

She flung herself on the ground on her face, with sudden, passionate cry. The truth had suddenly dawned across her—she had mistaken pity for love; she had promised to marry Austin, while she loved Sir Cyril with her whole heart.

He raised her in his arms; that one passionate despairing cry rang in his ears forever afterward.

"My darling Lenore, what is it?" he asked. "What is the matter?"

"I should have told you at first," she said, "but I could not. I have promised to marry Austin in a few weeks from now."

He stood quite still for one moment as she moved away from him, with a look on his face that she never forgot a look that, in the after years, she remembered against him.

"No man shall take you from me," he cried. "You are mine by right of my great love. No man shall take you from me. You are mine, Lenore; mine because I love you—neither Austin's nor another's. How can you marry Austin when you love me? I am sure you love me."

"Yes," she answered, in a dull, low voice; "I love you, Cyril; I see it all now—I did not understand it before. I thought I loved Austin, and when he asked me to marry him I said 'yes.' I missed pity for love."

"But, my darling, why despise? Austin is the most generous man I ever knew; when he understands that it was a mistake—nothing more than a terrible mistake—he will release you from your promise. I am sure of it, as I am of my own life."

"Neither do I doubt it, if I asked him," she said; "but I can never ask him. He gave up all his hopes, he gave up everything for me. I can never ask him to release me; but for me he would have been Sir Joycelyn's heir, not you, Cyril."

They stood in silence that neither cared to break, each feeling that it was for the last time they were together—and alone; then Sir Cyril said, suddenly:

"I cannot stay in England, Lenore; I shall go far away, to the utmost end of the earth. I can sacrifice my hopes and happiness, but I could not remain here to see you the wife of another; I must go."

"Do you call it wasted, Lenore? I would rather love you and be miserable in my love than blessed in the dearest love of another. Lenore, you are my fate, you are my twin soul! you are the other half of my life and my heart! Something tells me that we shall not always be parted."

"But in the meantime?" she said slowly.

"There are other worlds besides this, my darling. If I do not find you here I shall find you in another life; I shall live in that hope, if in no other."

CHAPTER VII.

The guests invited to the wedding had most of them gone, and Sir Cyril would fain have hurried away, but that Mrs. Audley seemed to cling to his presence. He stood now under the waving limes—Mrs. Audley had said good-by to him—the lawn where so many ladies had laughed and talked was deserted—the red, round sun was setting. Something cold and chill crept into the air; he stood trying to collect his scattered thoughts and faculties, trying to look his buried life in the face once more, when Gladie came slowly and gently up to him. She looked very beautiful in this the light of the setting sun; she was not Lenore, but she had lived near her; she seemed to belong to her, and his heart softened to her.

"How sad it all seems, Sir Cyril," she said. "After all, there is more sadness than pleasure in a wedding; I wonder how it is. Perhaps one realizes how uncertain human love is; when it seems most certain, how strangely sad and silent it is. We seem to be the only two left in the wide world now."

She was quick enough to see that his face softened, while his eyes filled with a tender light. She thought it was her self who caused the change—she did not think of the lost Lenore.

"Now, tell me," she said, "why are you going away—why can you not make up your mind to live at Eastwold, to take the good heaven has given you and be happy?"

He smiled sadly.

"Ah, why, Gladie? I wonder why? Perhaps because men are never satisfied. But you will feel sad enough; I need not add one thought. I will say good-by to you."

"Good-bye!" she repeated, with a strange whitening of her beautiful lips; "do you mean that I am not to see you again?"

"I leave to-morrow morning, and it may be years before I return. Good-bye, Gladie! You have been a dear friend to me. If I ever return I will thank you for your friendship better than I can do."

Her face had grown quite colorless. She held his hand tightly clasped in her own, but that close pressure was all unnoticed by him.

Then, down the broad, green path she saw the kingly figure of the man she loved—erect, haughty, and careless, yet with the mark of haggard sorrow in his pale, proud face. It seemed to her that her very heart left her and went out to him. She hastened after him. He looked at her in simple, earnest wonder.

"Gladie," he said, "my dear child, is it you? You startled me."

He stopped, and they sat down on the trunk of a tree that had fallen across the pathway; then he looked at her.

"I am much pleased to see you," she said.

But why did the touch of his strong fingers on her hand make her heart beat



HUSTLING HOOSIERS.

ITEMS GATHERED FROM OVER THE STATE.

An Interesting Summary of the More Important Doings of Our Neighbors—Weddings and Deaths—Crimes, Casualties, and General Indiana News Notes.

Feeble-Minded School.

Amos W. Butler, Secretary of the State Charities Board, who has just paid a visit to the Feeble-Minded Institute at Fort Wayne, says he found the institution in a most satisfactory condition. The boys are making pressed brick for the new buildings of the institution. The "Sunset" cottages for girls is already built to the second story, and will be completed by January 1.

Mr. Butler says the school expects to be able to receive all who make application for admission for the first of next year. The boys of the school, with the aid of only three men, who have been hired, have made three-quarters of a million pressed brick, and within the year they hope to make between a million and a million and a half. The Board of State Charities thinks that the employment of the boys of the institution is one of the greatest features of institutional work in the State.

Minor State Items.

Barney Wilhelm of Evansville, while tanked, fired a Winchester at a cop who went to arrest him for breaking up household furniture.

As Mrs. Sam Elder and children of Osgood were going nutting the horse ran away and threw her out on a rock, inflicting internal injuries.

W. H. Goodwin of Frankfort, is publishing a paper, the Sunday Gleaner, in Dawson City. His rates are \$7 a year in advance, or 25 cents a single copy.

Claude Madden of Veedersburg, started after a license to marry Miss Stella Russell, but on the way changed his mind, and went on to take in the Terre Haute street fair.

A farmer named John Winmill of St. Joseph County, went insane on the streets of Laporte, the other day, and had to be forcibly removed from a corner where he had fixed his gaze on a telegraph pole.

At the Nive Bottle Glass Factory at Elwood the boys employed carrying bottles to the ovens prepared to strike for more wages. It was checked by fifteen of the lads being discharged and as many girls being put in their places. This is the first kind of female help has been engaged in this kind of work among a great number of men.

A woman in Grant County has a scheme that beats the Klondike, the tale runs. The other day she sold a lot of comb honey to a Kokomo grocer. Her bees followed her to the store, and, swarming in, drove the proprietor and his customers out. At night, when the bees left, it was found that they had carried back home all the honey in the comb.

W. H. Riechers, teacher in the city schools of Hammond, wrapped a 14-year-old boy named Whitney, some time ago, under direction of Supt. Belman. Afterward the boy was taken sick. He died recently. Riechers was arrested on the charge of assault, but it has been changed to manslaughter. The Board of Education will defend him.

By shifting employees from straight time, work to a piece scale, the wire nail trust at Anderson has reduced wages from \$2.50 to \$2.00 a day, the men say. The plant has been closed since last spring, on account of a strike, and the men consented to go to work recently at the company's figures providing they be giving steady work and no more reductions.

When Joseph Cheneworth and his wife, followers of Divine-healer Dowie, charged with murder in letting their baby die for the lack of medical attention, were brought into the courtroom at Frankfort, the husband knelt in prayer, while his wife bowed her head. The charge against Mrs. Cheneworth had previously been dismissed. Five attorneys have volunteered their services for the defense.

Monroe Hedges, 105 years old, of Indianapolis, is dying of gangrene. He is a native of Kentucky, a soldier of two wars and quite recently he came into particular prominence by knocking out one of his sons, 70 years