

## AT WAR WITH HERSELF.

The Story of a Woman's Atonement,  
by Charlotte M. Braeme.

### CHAPTER XXI—Continued.

"It seems to me," she thought, "that even the flowers know he is coming. I am sure those roses are more fragrant, and the lilies more brilliant. I can see their golden hearts."

She buried her face amid the cool, deep lily-cups—she was as one bewitched by the charm of her own happiness—until Lady Fanshawe, struck by her manner, ventured to remark.

"Dear Lady Charnleigh, are you not well-bred women—perrot repeat?"

Repose while the leaves were whispering to the summer, and while the bees and butterflies conquered with the flowers, while her own heart was beating with delight that knew no words, every pulse and nerve thrilling! Lady Charnleigh laughed aloud.

"I am not conducting myself as a countess should," she said. "I had forgotten all about what you call the dignity of my position, auntie! I only remembered that I was, without exception, the happiest girl in the wide world. It is time to dress, Ethel," she added, turning to Miss Dacre. "I want you to look bewitching—I want to be a belle to fall in love with you."

She spoke lightly and never saw the death-like pallor that came over the sweet face.

"He has done something of the kind already, Leonie, but it is with you, not with me."

"A fact which would show that he had but taste nor sense, if it were true," laughed Lady Charnleigh. "Let me tell you what to dress you should wear, Ethel. Stand quite still, and I will study you."

She made a pretty picture, standing with a studious expression on her face, her finger laid on her lips. She could not be silent for long.

"What dreamy, poetic beauty yours is, Ethel! How strange that you should be like the 'Elaine' we saw at the exhibition! The painter must have known you."

"I do not think so," said Miss Dacre.

"You remind me of starlight, and—oh, Ethel, how beautiful the starlight is, how calm, serene, and holy, yet I have on a vivid idea of hidden fire!"

"You began to speak of my dress," observed Miss Dacre, patiently; "and you have already reached the stars. When will you be on earth again?"

"I shall never behave like a countess. A true lady of rank," said Miss Dacre, "should be known by her dignified and repose. Your dress, Ethel, must be black lace with white silk with silver flowers; you will personally starlight them."

But her own toilet was not so easily decided upon. That evening Lady Charnleigh was difficult to please. At last she chose a bewitching costume of pale sea-green silk, half covered with rich white lace, and looped up with white water-lilies; there was a small lily nestled in the coils of her fair hair; and with this dress, recherche and poetical, Lady Charnleigh wore a suit of magnificent emeralds.

An hour later and Lady Charnleigh sat at the head of the table. Perhaps her servants wondered why for these two gentlemen she had ordered the service of gold plate, which was usually reserved for state occasions. She knew she would have to pay to few others the honor she paid to Sir Bertram. She had given him her greatest words and kindly smiles; with them she sought to hide the vague, happy emotion that filled her heart. Paul Fleming saw the bright blushes on the glad young face, and tried to believe they were for him.

"You have some grand old pictures, I am told, Lady Charnleigh," said Sir Bertram, "may I ask you to show them to me?"

"Nothing would please me better," she said; "after dinner we will go through the gallery. Ethel, you are always talking of pictures—will you join us with Capt. Fleming? I like the gallery better than any part of Crown Leighton."

So after dinner they went. Lady Fanshawe declined to accompany them.

"You must know every picture well, consider the time you spend among them, Lady Charnleigh," she said.

One or two of her hearers were quite as well pleased that she should remain where she was.

Few private mansions in England could boast of a picture gallery so magnificent as that of Crown Leighton. It was large, lofty, and superbly decorated. In some places the walls are laid with mirrors; the ceilings had been painted by Le Brun; the windows formed deep bays that were carpeted with crimson cloth; and Sir Bertram, who had an artist's eye for color, thought he had never seen a fairer picture than that of Lady Charnleigh, with her robes of green silk and lace sweeping the floor. How well the artistic, picturesque dress suited her! How royally beautiful she looked in those shining emeralds!

"You will be my 'cicerone,'" he said. "I suppose Capt. Fleming knows all the glories of Crown Leighton."

The girl turned to the young soldier with a look of genuine frankness and regard on her face.

"You are generous not to hate me," she said, "when you see all that I have robbed you of."

"You have given me more than you have taken from me," he returned; and both look and words were so much pain to Ethel Dacre.

There was no lack of conversation among the four; they were all art-lovers; they knew most of the world's famous pictures; they could criticise and compare. Leonie, Lady Charnleigh, showed perhaps the greatest and most cultivated taste.

They lingered long in the gallery, while the western sunbeams came through the long windows and lighted up the gorgous colors on the walls; the light on the young and happy faces, with laughing words and bright, tender thoughts. They reached the end of the gallery at last, and came to a door half hidden by the velvet curtain that hung over it.

"That is a room I have never yet entered," said Lady Charnleigh; "shall we go in now?"

"What is it? A boudoir—a study? It is just the place for an artist's studio," said Sir Bertram.

"It was the favorite room of the late Lord Charnleigh," observed the young Countess. "Mrs. Fearon tells me he used to lock himself in there, and afterward come out looking so sad and sorrowful."

"The secret of such lives as his is always a tragedy," said Paul Fleming to Ethel. "I have often thought that the late lord of Crown Leighton had some sorrow the world knew nothing of."

It was Paul Fleming who opened the door, and Lady Charnleigh drew back with a little shudder, the color fading from her brilliant face.

"I have such a horrible fancy," she said, with a nervous attempt at laughter; "it is when I go in I shall find the late Earl sitting in his chair with stony face and set eyes."

"You may enter safely, Lady Charnleigh," responded Paul; "the room is quite empty. Yet it looked as though it had been recently used."

"I gave orders that nothing here should be touched," said the Countess; "I seemed to feel of desecration to enter the place."

There was a book on the table, a knife still resting on an uncut journal, "How strangely silent the place is! How different from the rest of the house," said Lady Charnleigh, with a sigh. "Come away—I feel as though the room were haunted."

She turned away, but her attention was drawn to Captain Fleming. He was standing before picture apparently engrossed by it. She called him by name; he did not hear. She moved forward and touched him on the arm, and was startled when he turned round to find his eyes full of tears. She looked the picture; it was of a young and beautiful girl, with sad, tender eyes and a lovely mouth. A grave, noble face it was, with a veil of sadness on it—a picture that had in it a certain pathos. Underneath, in faint characters, were written the words, "Loved and Lost."

Lady Charnleigh looked first at the picture, and then at the young soldier; there was a certain resemblance in the features that struck her.

"Who is it, Captain Fleming?" she asked, in a low voice.

"That is a portrait of my mother," he replied. "How comes it that it is hidden away here?"

"Loved and lost," quoted Lady Charnleigh—"what does it mean? Who loved and who lost her?"

"I do not know," replied Captain Fleming. "Pray pardon me, Lady Charnleigh; I did not know that you had a picture of my mother. I loved her so dearly."

"As sure as I am of my own existence, she always had the same sad, tender eyes, and when she smiled there was something sad in her smile. Those eyes have the same look now—do you notice it?"

Sir Bertram and Miss Dacre had joined them, and were listening to him in wonder.

"A portrait of your mother here?" questioned Miss Dacre. "That seems strange, Captain Fleming."

"I loved her so much," he said again; "and she died when I was quite young. Lady Charnleigh, will you grant me a great favor?"

"You know I will before you ask it," she replied.

"Permit me to have this copied. It should be most carefully preserved."

"You shall have the original if you will. I shall be quite content with the copy."

"You are very kind to me," he said, "but I will not agree to that. You have a superstitious feeling about this room; I have the same about this picture. I should not like to take it away—it belongs to the room."

"Loved and lost!" murmured the young countess. "What sorrowful words! There is a story contained in them—a sad story, too. What do they mean?"

The brilliant tint had faded from her; she had grown very pale and sorrowful, the violet eyes were dim with tears—her whole aspect was changed. Sir Bertram looked anxiously at her.

"You are too imaginative, Lady Charnleigh," he said. "Come away; you are growing sad and sorrowful. Come out into the sunshine."

Without a word she followed him. They went through the corridor at the end of the gallery, out on the western terrace, where the flowers were all in full bloom. Paul Fleming followed them. There, where the rose-shone and the song of the birds filled the perfumed air, Lady Charnleigh was soon herself again. The exquisite rose-flash stood back, the light came into her eyes.

"I have an idea," she said. "What do you think, Ethel? Shall we have a grand fete and ball here at Crown Leighton, and illuminate the grounds and gardens—a fete that will last from sunset to sunrise, and delight everybody?"

"I should like it very much," responded Miss Dacre. The two gentlemen agreed with her.

"Captain Fleming and you, Sir Bertram, must come over to help me; it will be my first grand entertainment. Shall we begin with charades? I am so fond of charades; and we could get up such really magnificent ones. What do you say?"

"It would be delightful," said Sir Bertram, thinking of the rehearsals and the number of times that he should see Lady Charnleigh.

"What a simple, charming nature she has!" remarked Sir Bertram to himself, with a smile. "She was weeping only a few minutes since, her heart full of pity; now she is laughing at the idea of a ball. She is a perfect Undine—half gay, half half child, half woman—wholly charming."

He raised his eyes in time to see the green silk and white water-lilies vanish between the trees.

"We may as well follow," said Paul Fleming. "Lady Charnleigh is all anxiety to put her scheme at once into train; she has gone without doubt to arrange the day for the ball."

CHAPTER XXII.

"I really ought to inaugurate my reign by a grand festivity," said Lady Charnleigh. "I like to do everything for myself."

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can choose from them. Sir Bertram and you shall have the first choice. Ethel and I will hear what you gentlemen suggest first."

"I think one of the plays I like best is the 'Lady of Lyons,'" said Sir Bertram; "we could have a very effective tableau from that, Lady Charnleigh—the scene where the pretended prince describes his palace by the lake of Como. It is a lovely picture; the fair Paulina, with her golden hair, falling round her, listening with rapt attention on her lover's arm. You would make a beautiful Paulina, Lady Charnleigh."

"But who is to be my prince?" she asked, with a blush and a smile.

"I should be most happy," began Sir Bertram, but Paul Fleming interrupted him.

"The Prince must be dark, and you are fair, Bertram. If you will permit me, Lady Charnleigh, I will place myself at your disposal."

She was disappointed, but smiled graciously. Captain Fleming thought to himself that he had won a great victory over his rival, for such he began to perceive Sir Bertram was.

"Now it is your turn Captain Fleming," said the Countess.

"I am the one of the most effective I ever saw as an actress representing Romeo and Juliet in 'Juliet's cell,'" said Ethel.

"Ethel shall be Juliet," put in Lady Charnleigh.

"No," said Miss Dacre; "Juliet was a bright, radiant beauty. You would look the character much better than I do."

"Let it be so then," returned the Countess.

"Who is to be my Romeo?"

"Romeo was fair," said Sir Bertram, quickly; "permit me to hold the distinguished office, Lady Charnleigh."

She smiled to hide the happiness which the bare idea gave her.

"Those will be two good scenes," she said. "Now, Ethel?"

"I am puzzled," said Miss Dacre.

"You remember the picture of Elaine, Ethel; nothing would suit you so well as that. She was watching Sir Lancelot ride away. You could assume that she is of unutterable, hopeless love; besides, your features resemble Elaine's as depicted on the canvas."

Miss Dacre smiled. One observing her keenly might have seen how silent and grieved with pain that smile was.

How to Keep Frost Out of the Cellar.

It has been my plan to keep frost out of my vegetable cellar by keeping a lighted kerosene stove there during the coldest nights. I began this plan about a dozen years ago and it has worked well. I use one of the largest stoves, as my cellar is a large one. If a farmer has no kerosene stove at hand, on an emergency he can raise the temperature of his cellar from near freezing to seventy degrees in a few minutes by saturating a dozen old newspapers with kerosene and burning these in coal hobs, two at a time. Have the kerosene poured on them just sufficient to saturate.

By using two hobs the unconsumed fragments in the one fire can be put in the other before it is lighted, which will insure there being no fire there when repacked with paper.

The precaution needed is to have a clear space above and around the hobs of six feet and be sure that there is no fire left in the hobs, and that its temperature is not at ignition heat when pouring the kerosene on the paper. A quartz used in this way will raise the temperature of a cellar of size thirty feet by about twenty minutes. The body of the cellar will be a little more than half the size of the room, and the temperature will be raised by about twenty minutes.

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