

Prologue to Love

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By
MARTHA
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CHAPTER X

It was only a ruse on the part of the Laird to despatch Autumn to town on business that he could have attended to as well himself on his next visit. He wanted the house to himself. He would have contrived some means of getting old Hannah out of the way as well, but there were limits, after all, beyond which a man of self-respect will refuse to go. For that matter, he would have permitted Autumn to remain at home had it not been that he feared the hurt to her feelings which the presence of young Lander in the house would occasion.

For the Laird had asked Bruce to come over and talk to him on matters that could not be discussed with any degree of satisfaction over the telephone. Jarvis, of course, might have gone to the Laird and place and talked with Bruce, but he had not some suspicion, perhaps, that the Laird, besides young Lander, had not shown the slightest disposition to suggest that he should visit the Laird in his own house.

And now as he sat and waited for the boy, he was strangely interested. In a few minutes he would be talking face to face with the son of Geoffrey Lander, talking as man to man, though it was difficult to think that young Bruce had really come to man's estate. In all these years he had never talked to Bruce more than to exchange a greeting when they met, or to make some polite enquiry regarding his mother's health. In that, he had often told himself, he had not been wholly to blame. The boy had been raised under the influence of Jane Lander, whose bitterness had lasted until the day of her death. Bruce had been quite as aloof as he had been. At Jane Lander's funeral, Jarvis had been deeply moved by the boy's bereavement, and had wished with all his heart that he might have been able to summon the courage to take him aside and speak to him. For in spite of all that had kept them apart, he had never been free of a desire to play the part of a father to Bruce Lander.

The sound of a car coming to a stop before the house brought Jarvis to his window. He saw Bruce step from his car and approach the door. He turned from his window and seated himself in his big chair before his desk. Presently he heard old Hannah's voice in the hall below and in a moment Bruce Lander presented himself in the library doorway.

Jarvis looked up as his visitor announced himself. It might have been Geoffrey Lander himself, he carried himself with such ease of manner and a bearing so erect and challenging. He was dressed in riding breeches and a soft gray shirt that was open at the throat.

"Good morning, Lander," Jarvis greeted him, without getting up. "Come in and sit down."

Bruce entered the room and remained standing before the Laird. "You wanted to talk to me," he prompted.

"Yes," Jarvis replied. "Sit down, sit down."

He waved a hand to a vacant chair and Bruce seated himself and glanced quickly about the room. There followed an awkward pause which Bruce sought to break at once.

"I hope you are well, Mr. Dean," he ventured with determined cordiality.

From beneath his shaggy brows, the Laird's severe eyes pierced Bruce with a look that would have brought discomfort to anyone with a less easy conscience.

"Well enough—well enough," Jarvis replied. "A man of my years doesn't find fault if he's taken with an ache or pain now and then."

"You're good for a long while yet, Mr. Dean," Bruce said.

"Quite possible, quite possible," the Laird said, taking a cigar from the box on his table and nipping the end with his teeth. "Better smoke, Lander," he said then. "We'll both talk better. I'd offer you a cigar, but you young fellows—"

"I have some cigarettes with me, thanks," Bruce told him as he took a package from his shirt pocket and selected one. He struck a match and held it to the Laird's cigar, oddly moved by this momentary intimacy with a man who had been a mysterious and forbidding figure to him as long as he could remember.

"You have lost some sheep," the Laird began as soon as Bruce had seated himself.

"Thirty-four," Bruce replied.

"Your prize Merinos, they were," "Yes, sir," Bruce said.

"Too bad, too bad," Jarvis observed. "Gilly tells me they were poisoned—strychnine in the salt trough. You're sure of that?"

"The vet's report was waiting for me when I got home."

"Aye—so I understand. He tells me, too, that you suspect this man, Belfort."

"We have no proof of it," Bruce said. "I have my own opinion, and it amounts to a conviction."

"You might be wrong, of course," Bruce smiled. "Certainly, sir, but I don't think I am this time."

The Laird leaned forward and tapped the ash from his cigar. "I admit the man would do it—he's the kind that would if he had any rea-

son for it. But even a bad man doesn't act without a motive."

"I supplied him with a motive, I'm afraid," Bruce replied directly.

"Aye—I was coming to that. You had some sort of a rumour with him in town last week, I'm told."

"I had," Bruce admitted.

"It was over something that Belfort had to say about—my daughter—wasn't it?" the Laird asked.

"I should have done precisely what I did, sir, whether it had been your daughter or any other woman."

Jarvis dismissed the suggestion with a wave of his hand. "Certainly, my boy, certainly. But that has nothing whatever to do with the business."

He paused and drew a deep breath, then relaxed into his chair. "You are still a very young man, Lander," he went on, "and I am an old man. My opinion may count very little to a man of your years. But if a young woman chooses to make a trollop of herself, she must take the consequences."

"I don't see how it can be helped," Jarvis said. "I have seen too many young men make such mistakes to be able to help them."

"I would not have been here if you had left well enough alone. Instead of making both my daughter and yourself the laughing stock of the countryside?"

"I'm afraid we can't agree on that, sir," Bruce replied. "I am, of course, sorry for any unpleasantness it may have caused either you or Autumn."

Jarvis Dean's face darkened. "Be that as it may, Lander," he said, "I'd prefer to look after such things myself, in the future, when they concern me or one of my own house."

"Very good, sir," Bruce returned, his lips tightening.

"In fact, my boy, I mean to do whatever I can to wipe out the unfortunate results of this affair. How much do you figure those Merinos of yours were worth to you?"

Bruce flushed. "I haven't figured that out, exactly, Mr. Dean," he replied.

"Put your own price on them, then, and let me know what it is. I want to make it good to you."

Bruce looked at Jarvis, aware of a quick surge of feeling within him. He was silent for a moment. There were times when a man might pardonably give way to anger, but this was not such a time, he told himself, in a resolute effort at self-control. After all, the Laird was making what he undoubtedly felt to be a generous gesture.

"I understand what you mean, Mr. Dean," he said at last, "but my loss is my own. I brought it on myself and I'll foot the bill."

The great hands of Jarvis Dean came down heavily upon the arms of his chair as he leaned toward Bruce. "You don't mean—you are not refusing my offer?" he demanded harshly.

Bruce laughed outright. "You surely didn't expect me to accept it?" he replied. "I haven't come to that yet, sir."

A livid vein stood out upon Jarvis' forehead. He got to his feet with astonishing and fiery swiftness. "That, Lander, is—sheer impudence!" he gasped.

Bruce, who had risen promptly when Jarvis stood up, looked steadily into the older man's eyes.

"Are you not being a bit unreasonable, Mr. Dean?" he asked.

The Laird snorted. "That's enough, sir—and more than enough!" he replied. "I have made you a gentleman's offer—and you have refused it. Do I understand you aright, sir?"

"I couldn't think of accepting it, Mr. Dean."

"Very well, Lander—very well! You may have it your way, then. But from this day forward there will be no dealings between us, do you understand? You are a stranger to us—to me and my daughter—for the rest of our days."

He stepped toward Bruce and thrust his great head forward. "Do you understand that?" he demanded.

"Perfectly, I think," Bruce replied, and fumbled in his breast pocket for another cigarette.

The hand that struck the match was not altogether steady, but he knew now that he had his feelings under control. When he turned toward Jarvis Dean again, he was startled quite off his guard at the shocking change that had come over the old man. The Laird was leaning heavily with one hand on the back of his chair, his head bowed forward, his other hand passing uncertainly across his eyes as though to brush from them something that obscured his vision. Bruce took an apprehensive step toward him, but immediately Jarvis drew himself erect. Although his face was drawn and white, he made a curt bow.

"Good day, Lander!" he said, and stood awaiting Bruce's withdrawal.

Bruce looked at him for one brief moment in frowning perplexity and with a feeling of some unfathomable uneasiness. Then he bade the Laird a quiet good-by and turned away. As he left the room, Jarvis Dean slumped heavily into his chair and sat listening to the sound of Bruce's footsteps descending the stairs.

The Laird was still in his library an hour or so later, when Autumn

returned from town. When he heard her mounting the stairway presently, he closed the large, leather-bound journal in which he was writing and laid it carefully away in the drawer of his table. He locked the drawer and returned the small key to its wonted place above the desk.

He turned as Autumn came into the room.

"You're back," he said. "It didn't take you long."

"I've been gone three hours," she remarked. "There wasn't much to do."

"Did you see Snyder?"

"I found him in his office. He'll be out to see you tomorrow afternoon."

Jarvis got up from his table and stood before the fireplace. "I had young Lander out to see me," he said abruptly.

"Hannah told me," Autumn replied. "Was there some—some trouble between you? Hannah says—"

"Hannah talks too much," the Laird said. "She's a gossip."

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Half an hour later, he tied his horse to a birch tree near his herder's cabin in the ravine, rubbed the animal's muzzle affectionately, and gave him a lump of sugar in response to a peremptory whinny. Within the cabin, Bruce undressed quickly, threw about himself the old bathrobe he had brought along, and with a towel on his arm, emerged and walked down into the ravine and up the creek to where the mountain stream narrowed and deepened.

After a dip in the cool water and a brisk toweling, he tied his robe about him and stood for a moment listening to the mountain voices that drew from the steep above him, plaintive, spaced in piquant intervals, sometimes all but unheard: a hoot-owl's reproachful enquiry, the sleepy, last note of a bird dropped like a soft jewel into the twilight, the scurry of some small animal into the underbrush, the sigh of a dying wind in the tall pines. But the beauty and significance of the night conspired against him, tore down the defensive structure he had erected about his being. It had all converged suddenly into an intense desire for Autumn Dean.

In a rage at himself, he turned brusquely and made his way back to the cabin, where he dressed hurriedly in the half-darkness. He was gathering up the things he had brought with him when he heard his horse whinny, and a moment later the animal's head and neck came into view through the doorway.

Bruce tossed the dressing gown and towel down upon a chair and came with slow deliberateness to the door. He placed one hand against the door frame and the other on his hip, and stood looking down at her, a contemplative half-smile about his mouth that drew his right cheek up into a quizzical long hollow—that hollow that she had pictured in all her tormenting thoughts of him. He was waiting for her to speak.

"Bruce—" she began, and knew how desolately her voice faltered—"Mr. Gilly told me I should find you here. I've been wanting to talk to you."

"You too?" Bruce remarked. "The Dean family has suddenly acquired a vivid interest in me, it seems."

She fumbled with her gloves. She raised her head and looked at him with blank eyes. "I should like to come in, if you please," she ventured.

Bruce laughed caustically as he opened the door for her and stood well to one side. "You are quite welcome," he said. "It happens I have no kerosene in the lamp. I wasn't expecting a guest."

He lighted a cigarette and offered the package to her. Autumn shook her head. "As you will," he said, and replaced the package in his shirt pocket.

Autumn seated herself in the dim light close to the door, while Bruce leaned against the table's edge with his feet crossed idly before him. She could see him looking at her reflectively through the dimness, and the half-smile did not leave his face.

"You were over to see father this morning," she began.

"At his invitation," Bruce replied. "He wished to reimburse me for some sheep I lost."

"He told me so."

"He should have told you, also, that we were to have nothing to say to each other in the future."

"He told me that, too."

"Is this visit, then, just another little gesture on your part?"

"A gesture—of what kind?"

"Disobedience to the Laird—and contempt for me," Bruce supplemented.

"Father has no suspicion that I have come to see you," Autumn explained. "And if I wanted to show contempt for you, I should have stayed away."

"As you have done all summer," he observed.

Autumn clenched her fists in her lap as she felt her anger rise. She had not come here to have him bait her. "I should hardly expect you to understand that," she said.

Bruce's smile was sardonic. "It isn't so difficult to understand," he replied. "You found people of your own kind. I am not blaming anyone for that. It was just my misfortune that you should have called on me here that night—before you found the others."

"That was a misfortune?" Autumn asked Bruce.

"Not a serious one," he admitted with a smile. "It was rather good, while it lasted."

She was on her feet at once, confronting him with eyes that burned in a face gone suddenly white.

"Bruce Lander," she cried, "I came over here tonight to ask you if we couldn't be friends, in spite of what my father said to you this morning!"

"Your pride must have suffered before you came to that decision," he returned coldly.

"That is my own affair," she retorted. "Why don't you tell me at once that I'm wasting my time?"

"I could have done so," Bruce said quietly. "If you had told me at once what had brought you over. I decided, long ago, that you and I cannot be friends, Autumn."

She threw back her head in a proud gesture. "I shall not ask you the reason," she said, and turned toward the door.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



By LEMUEL F. PARTON

WHO'S NEWS THIS WEEK

NEW YORK.—The Finns are going ahead bravely with their plans for this year's Olympic games, and Urho Kekkonen, minister of the interior, crowding 50, defeats another statesman in the 100-meter race, coming under the wire in 12.5 seconds. His time in a race against the same opponent 15 years ago, was 10.9. Recently, in the Trisathlon, 10 members of the Finnish parliament, some of them with a touch of frost over the ears, engaged in the 100-meter sprint, the broad jump and shot-putting events.

Olympic Flame Still Burning in Helsinki

Mr. Kekkonen, a leader in Finnish politics since Finland's independence in 1917, was elected to the Finnish Parliament in 1922, and served as prime minister in 1932. He was a member of the Finnish distance runner, as an amateur, the Finns slapped a boycott on the Swedes, and, for years thereafter, there was bickering in the Baltic, with Mr. Kekkonen out in front as a peace advocate. In 1935, the Finns refused to lift the boycott, but, under the shadow of foreign aggression, this was more or less forgotten and the sprinting statesman was in the lead for Scandinavian solidarity, in war and sports.

He helped suppress the Communist party in 1930, and with equal vigor drove against the Fascists in later years. In November of last year, the diet sustained him in his move to restrain the 373 Fascist and Nazi organizations in Finland, and their 18 newspapers, but, a month later, a Helsinki magistrate sustained his totalitarian opponents. He followed with a devastating expose of their subversive activities and had the nub of the argument when Germany made its deal with Red Russia, Finland's old bete noir. The Russians are now complaining bitterly that the Finnish sprinters, in the cabinet and out, insist on running in their direction. They seem to think it isn't sporting.

LONG before the Civil war, girls like Scarlett O'Hara were learning to curtsy and how to enter a ballroom in Athens college, at Athens, Ala.

Fine Stockings, Education From Athens College

Along with news of Atlanta's grand swirl of crinoline and old lace comes word that Athens college, of prunes and prisms tradition, is putting in a big hosiery mill to be operated by the college girls. It will employ 100 students, at 25 cents an hour.

Dr. Eugene Rudolph Naylor, president of the college, thought up the mill plan and gathered funds for it. He says, "This is a liberal arts college, steeped in the traditions of the Old South, and the main purpose of this experiment is to give the students means to obtain a liberal arts education."

"And," he might have added, "silk stockings to match the education."

Cactus colleges have been getting their turn in the spotlight for turning out lethal football. Dr. Naylor, an alumnus of several of them, has been working small-college innovations, of possibly greater interest and importance. He has been president of Columbia college of Milton, Ore., Woman's college of Jackson, Tenn., Logan and Athens colleges, dean of Logan college and professor at Wesleyan, and Emory and Henry colleges. He is a resourceful educator who thinks it's a good idea for girls to learn how much material and work goes into a pair of silk stockings.

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S first dollar-a-year man becomes president of the \$1,000,000,000 Associated Gas and Electric company. He is Roger J. Whiteford, Washington lawyer, and former general counsel for the Federal Housing administration.

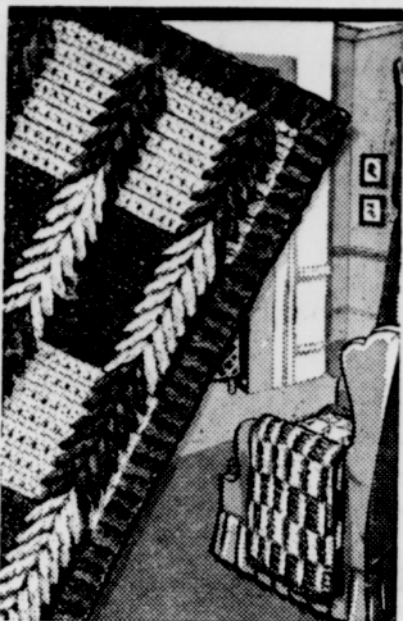
It is a score for the little red schoolhouse in his home town of Whiteford, Md.—named after his ancestors—a schoolhouse in which two signers of the Declaration of Independence were taught. After his graduation from West Nottingham academy, he was a high school principal for five years, at Sandy Springs and Rockville, Md., studied law and began practice at Washington.

His career has been advanced in his profession, and in finance—he holds several important industrial directorates—and his dollar-a-year job was his one side-turn to public life.

(Consolidated Features—WNU Service.)

Easy Afghan Smart Done in Two Shades

An afghan for a beginner! In two shades of a color, it's worked in single crochet, with rib stitch forming a herringbone design. Pattern 6505 contains directions



Pattern 6505

for making afghan; illustration of it and stitches; materials required; color schemes; photograph of section of afghan.

To obtain this pattern send 15 cents in coins to The Sewing Circle, Household Arts Dept., 259 W. 44th St., New York, N. Y.

Please write your name, address and pattern number plainly.

Strange Facts

Long Time Between—Highly Taxed Alky Compensation Laws

Several large American firms, one of which is the F. W. Woolworth company, pay their chief executives only once a year.

When purchased by any organization other than a hospital or a scientific laboratory, a 55-gallon drum of pure alcohol, which sells for \$15, carries a federal tax of \$235.

Florida has a law that forbids a married woman to manage a business until a court of inquiry has studied and passed upon her competency. Furthermore, she has to pay the cost of the proceedings.

How much the lens of a light-house intensifies light is well illustrated by the one in the Navesink station in New Jersey. This lens increases its 2,400-candlepower light 3,750 times, or into a 9,000,000 candlepower beam, which can be seen at a distance of about 25 miles.

While some states have not yet passed a workmen's compensation law, other states have been so liberal that they have granted workmen's compensation for such ailments as flat feet, writer's cramp and bedsores.—Collier's.

We Go Together!

We all of us tend to rise or fall together. If any set of us goes down, the whole nation sags a little. If any of us raise ourselves a little, then by just so much the nation as a whole is raised.—Theodore Roosevelt.

Beware Coughs from common colds That Hang On

Creomulsion relieves promptly because it goes right to the seat of the trouble to loosen germ laden phlegm, increase secretion and aid nature to soothe and heal raw, tender, inflamed bronchial mucous membranes. No matter how many medicines you have tried, tell your druggist to sell you a bottle of Creomulsion with the understanding that you are to like the way it quickly allays the cough or you are to have your money back.

CREOMULSION for Coughs, Chest Colds, Bronchitis

No, No, No Never volunteer for nothing under no circumstances.—Wirkus.

OUT OF SORTS?

Here is Amazing Relief of Conditions Due to Sluggish Bowels. If you