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March 5, 1900 -

FLORABEL'S LOVER

By LAURA JEAN LIBBEY

Author of "When Lovely Maiden Stoops to Folly," "A Broken Betrothal," "Parted by Fate," "Parted at the Altar," etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS.

Florabel was a dependent of her step-father, Squire Pemberton. His daughter, Florabel, and when the squires, order her out of the old home. Max Forrester a rich young man marries her and introduces her into his family. Members of which disapprove of his marriage, as they wanted him to marry Miss Clavering, an heiress.

CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

She walked slowly and thoughtfully up to her room.

"A convict's daughter! A forger's sister!" she murmured. "Heaven pity me! How quickly Max would leave me if he knew that!"

That night, while darkness and silence fell upon the villa, there was one beneath its roof who seemed to die a living death. That night a fair young face lost its radiance and youth; a pure, loving heart rebelled bitterly against dark, stern fate; a golden head tossed wearily to and fro; and in the darkness came but that one thought:

"If Max knew, he would despise me and send me from him."

In the rose garden which lay back of the villa a different scene was transpiring. Max Forrester was pacing up and down like one driven mad.

He had followed Arthur Hurlhurst to the station, and it would have ended in a tragedy if fate had not interfered. He arrived there a few minutes after the train had started, bearing his handsome guest with it.

Max Forrester retraced his steps to the villa, but it was hours before he could control himself sufficiently to enter the house and go up to Florabel's boudoir.

The house was wrapped in gloom and darkness. No doubt she slept. What he had to say to her must wait until to-morrow.

All night long he paced the library—surely, one of the most unhappy men the world ever beheld.

Early the next morning he sent for Florabel.

"Would she go down to the drawing room? Mr. Forrester was waiting there to see her." That was the message her maid delivered.

She threw on her pretty blue morning robe, and hurried down stairs. She pushed the door open softly.

Max stood before the mantel, his fair, handsome head leaning on his hand against the cold, pulseless marble, his back turned toward her.

How dejected and unhappy he looked; or, perhaps it was only her fancy. Florabel tiptoed shyly to his side, and glanced up into his handsome face. How strange, haggard and white he looked.

It was a wonder that the odor of the pale rose she wore did not warn him of her near presence; it usually did. He was so much engrossed in

his thoughts that he appeared neither to see nor hear.

"Max," she called, softly, holding out her little white hands to him.

He started and wheeled suddenly around.

A startled cry escaped her lips. The face that she had never seen stern nor anger before was both now, and his eyes were flashing and stormy.

He tried to make himself feel sure that Florabel would clear away all the unpleasant mystery by a few simple words.

He did not attempt to touch her, and as he looked down into the lovely face—so dainty, so sweet, so pure and loving—the words he had sent for her to hear seemed more bitter than death to utter. Yet pride demanded it. Yes, he must speak, and the sooner it was gotten over with the better.

"Florabel," he said, sternly and abruptly, "I have sent for you to explain to me, if you can, the mystery of last night's meeting which I witnessed in the rose arbor."

The horrible words died away in utter silence. He saw the question strike her as a keen, blighting draught of chilly air strikes a hot-house flower. She quivered from head to foot, and drooped before the pitiless anger of his stern, accusing voice.

The color fled from her crimson lips, and the light died from her beautiful eyes, raised so pathetically to his. She tried to answer, but the words died away in a faint gasp.

It seemed to her that the great chandelier above her head went whirling around her, the garish light of day faded into utter darkness; yet, through it all, she could see Max Forrester's white face and angry eyes.

"Do you deny that you were there?" he asked, bitterly. "That you met Arthur Hurlhurst there, and by appointment? Remember, I saw you, and I saw him. Do you deny it?"

"Ah, no!" she gasped, piteously.

"How can I, when—you saw me?" she stammered, with a hard sob, that might have melted a heart of stone. But his anger was so thoroughly aroused he did not heed it.

She clasped her little white hands together, as though she were uttering a silent prayer in piteous agony.

"Florabel," he said, "tell me the object of that secret meeting, that I may judge if there be any circumstance that extenuates or explains such an action. Be frank with me."

The tone of his voice might have warned her.

The golden head crooped, a look of terror stole into her eyes. She must not betray Arthur; no, no. Heaven help her—she dare not!

"Will you tell me why you met Arthur Hurlhurst in the rose arbor?" he asked again.

"I—I—cannot, Max," she gasped, oh! so faintly.

"Tell me what is this man to you?" he cried, his face awful with dark, grim fury. "I will be answered! I will know!"

"You are strong and I am weak; you might kill me—strike me dead at your feet—but, oh, Max, I could not answer. I dare not!"



CHAPTER XIII.

It was the most terrible moment of beautiful, hapless Florabel's life. A hushed silence had ensued between them since that fatal answer had fallen from her lips—"Oh, Max, Heaven help me! I—I—cannot tell you what Arthur Hurlhurst is to me."

She had sunk on her knees before him, her beautiful golden hair falling in abandon about her death-like face, her little hands clenched tightly over her heart. She quite believed it was breaking, there was such intense pain with each throbbing.

She could feel his eyes burning down into her very soul; he was standing before her in the attitude of a judge before a criminal.

"What shall I say to you?" he cried, bitterly. "You have done that which, in the eyes of the world, would seem most appalling; the situation does not seem to strike you. Oh, fair of face and false of heart, you shall tell me what took you to the rose-arbor—why you kept that appointment."

"Do not judge me so harshly, Max," she wailed out despairingly; and she was so lovely in her utter woe that his heart was touched in spite of himself.

He stepped nearer to her, and laid

his hand heavily on her shoulder.

"Answer me this, Florabel," he said, in a low, hoarse, constrained voice, as though he hated the thought that prompted the question: "Has this man—any—any—claim upon you?"

The blood almost froze in his veins as he saw her bow her golden head in token of assent. He staggered back with a cry of anguish never to be forgotten.

"I ask from Heaven what I have ever done that I am so terribly punished?" he cried.

But from the blue heaven to which he appealed there was no reply.

"Some men meet with a cruel fate," he said, "but they deserve it. In my life I may not have done much good, but I have done no great harm. I am too honorable a man to be made a dupe of. I have no words," he continued, slowly, "in which to upbraid you; they are all weak and meaningless. To speak to you I want words that lash, scourge and burn."

"Have pity," the poor girl gasped, tears falling like rain down her face.

"You deserve none," declared Max Forrester, bitterly. "I did wrong, perhaps, in persuading you to marry me. You were very young and inexperienced. I thought you cared for me. You never told me you had a lover; you befooled me."

Her white lips parted in horror and dismay. She tried to answer him—to refute the cruel charge—but the words died away in her throat.

"It is time that we came to an understanding," he cried. "Never more shall you be wife of mine until this mystery is cleared. Do you hear me, Florabel? Though it wrecks my life I will cast you out of my heart. Our paths shall lie asunder. I will give you to-day in which you can decide whether you will confess all to me. If by midnight you still refuse, I shall return to New York, and my object will be to secure a separation from you."

Even as he uttered the words he did not mean them; it was simply his intention to frighten the truth from her.

(To be continued.)

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3 10 7 15	lv Ch'town st	9 45 2 10
3 30 7 31	Royalty Junc	9 25 1 55
4 17 8 12	N. Wiltshire	8 39 1 18
4 21 8 25	Hunter River	8 25 1 05
5 17 8 29	Conrad Juc	7 44 12 39
5 47 9 25	Kensington	7 09 12 02
6 30 9 50 ar	S'aside	lv 6 35 11 35
P. M. 12 30 lv	Wellington	ar A. M. 10 10
1 13	Port Hill	9 27
1 51	Or'Leary	8 40
3 00	Alberton	7 40
4 05	Tignish	6 35
5 00 ar		lv 5 40
P. M.		A. M.
P. M.		A. M.
2 10 lv	Charlottetown	ar 10 10
3 35 ar	Mt. Stewart	lv 8 45
3 50 lv	Junction	ar 8 30
4 22	Cardigan	7 15
4 25	Georgetown	lv 3 50
P. M.		A. M.
5 15 lv E		35
6 05 ar		
P. M.		A. M.
5 25	Stewart	ar 2 25
6 15	Morell	7 57
6 25	E. C. Peter	7 28
6 42	Souris	lv 6 00
P. M.		A. M.
5 15 lv E		35
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