

The Rightful Heir

The son of Marion Vance went forth upon his self-imposed mission—to find the man who had plotted to betray his mother, prove to him the validity of his marriage, and then, leaving him forever, return to Wyoliffe and claim his inheritance there.

Leaving him thus engaged, we must for a time turn our thoughts in another direction—to Paul Tressalia, who was called from Newport suddenly, as already mentioned in our story.

It will be remembered that on the same night of his final rejection by Editha Dalton, he had received important letters which demanded his immediate presence abroad, and that, summoned, with his heart so sore from his disappointment, he was only too glad to obey.

We have already explained how Paul Tressalia was related to the Marquis of Wyoliffe, his grandmother being the Marquis' only sister, and should he die without issue, her heirs would inherit his proud name and wealth belonging to him.

When the blow came that destroyed all the Marquis' fond hopes, and Marion Vance was driven forth from her home to hide her disgrace, and bring up her illegitimate child far from the human eye, Paul Tressalia, then about six years of age, was at once acknowledged the heir, and from that time educated accordingly.

It was the news of the sudden death of the Marquis, and of his own succession to his vast property, both in France and England, that had hastened his departure from Newport.

This letter, by some unaccountable means, had been mislaid, and did not reach him until more than a month after his kinsman's death, and so, without any delay, he hastened to present himself at Wyoliffe.

He had never mentioned his prospects to any one during his sojourn in America, where he had tarried longer by a year than he at first intended, on account of his love for Editha. So, although he was reported to be the heir to vast wealth, no one really seemed to know just in what the wealth consisted, or what his future prospects were. He was very modest and unassuming regarding them, preferring to be accepted solely upon his own merits wherever he went, rather than upon the dignity of his prospective grandeur.

He took possession of Wyoliffe immediately upon his return to England, and also of all the property belonging to the previous Marquis. And yet, in the midst of all his prosperity, he was sad and depressed.

The one woman whom he loved could not share it with him, and all his bright prospects, like the apples of Sodom, turned to ashes in his grasp.

"Oh, my bright Editha!" he moaned, "why could you not have loved me, when I could have given you everything that would make life beautiful to you, when you are so well fitted to give the position you would have filled as my wife! The beautiful things around me are but mockery—they are nothing to me compared with the love I crave."

This was his continual cry, and he would shut himself away from every human eye for days, and battle with himself, striving to conquer his hopeless love.

Then it began to be whispered and suggested to him that Wyoliffe must have a mistress—he was over thirty, and it was high time that some good, true woman came to cheer him, and to give him many years that had been no mistress.

"Oh, God!" he cried, after some one had spoken to him of this: "I love but one—I cannot, I will not yield her place to another! My life is there no escape!" and his sense of what was right and proper told him that it ought to be so.

And so several months went by, while all the county yielded him homage, and every matron with a marriageable daughter upon her hands showered upon him every attention that her fertile brains could suggest.

One day he was sitting alone in his library thinking of this and a magnificent room, he it known, was this library at Wyoliffe, furnished with ebony, upholstered in olive green and gold. The rich ebon bookcase, inlaid with pearl and precious woods, reached from ceiling to floor, and was filled with countless volumes, each collection bound in uniform covers. It had been the pride of the previous Marquis' heart, his one source of comfort, after his bitter trouble came upon him, and he had spent the greater part of his life there among his choice books.

And it seemed likely also to be the resort of Paul Tressalia, for here he brought himself and his troubles, and looked within his fort, no one dared to intrude; and, as he sat there one morning thinking bitterly of what might have been, a servant came to the door and knocked for admittance. With a shrug and frown of impatience, he rose and went to the door, where he was handed a card.

It bore the name of a noted lawyer from London—"Archibald Faxon."

"Show him in," the young Marquis said, with a weary sigh at being obliged to see any one, and wondering what this noted stranger could want of him.

The Hon. Archibald Faxon soon made his appearance—a wiry, sharp-featured man, with a keen, restless eye that was capable of reading a man through almost instantly—any one would have known him as a lawyer, and a successful one, too, merely to look at him.

The young Marquis greeted him with a show of cordiality, and then politely waited for him to state his business.

"He was not long in coming to the point," "I fear I have come to you upon a very unpleasant errand," he said, severely, and yet with an appearance of regret in his manner.

"Indeed?" was Paul Tressalia's indifferent reply. "It did not appear to him that anything would move him after what he had already suffered."

"Yes, your lordship; I have to present to you the claims of another to the property of Wyoliffe, and all other properties connected with it."

Paul Tressalia regarded the man with almost stupid wonder for a moment. A more ridiculous assertion it struck him, could not have been made by the most witless fool in the kingdom.

"Sir, I do not understand you," he managed to say, at last.

The noted Mr. Faxon very deliberately

and distinctly repeated this statement.

"Are you aware how very absurd such an assertion sounds, Mr. Faxon?" Paul Tressalia asked, with curling lips. "Why, I am the only living representative of the whole family, and what you assert is simply preposterous."

"Not so much so as you may suppose," returned the lawyer, calmly.

Mr. Tressalia began to grow rather red in the face at this; he could not exactly make out whether the lawyer meant to insult him or not; his manner was courteous, but what he said was such an unheard-of proposition that he was at a loss to comprehend it.

"If that is the nature of your business with me to-day, you will excuse me if I say I cannot listen to you any further," he said, rather coldly.

"Bear with me, if you please, my lord, for a few moments," returned the impetuous lawyer, with a wave of his shapely hand, "and allow me to ask you a few questions. Did not the former Marquis have an only child?"

"Yes; but she forfeited all claim to the property according to the conditions of the entail and was disowned by her father more than twenty years ago."

"That child gave birth to a son, I've been told," remarked Mr. Faxon, not heeding Mr. Tressalia's statement.

"I really cannot say whether it was a son or daughter," he answered, his lips curling just a trifle. "Which?"

"It was illegitimate, and could inherit nothing."

"If he had been born in wedlock, it would have inherited the property which you now hold, would it not?"

"Yes; but it was not born in wedlock, consequently all this argument is utterly useless," the young Marquis said, impatiently.

"Are you quite sure, my lord, of the truth of what you assert?" was the next unflinching query.

"Certainly; it is according to Miss Vance's own confession to her father; she owned she had been deceived, and that she had entered into a marriage had been consummated."

"Is it not barely possible that Miss Vance herself may have been mistaken in the matter?"

"I should think not, when interests of so vital importance were at stake," Paul Tressalia answered, with something very like a sneer upon his fine face.

The question was so utterly devoid of sense and reason, at least to him, that he could not control it.

"But it is my duty to prove to you that such was the case, notwithstanding. May I ask your attention to some documents which I have in my possession?"

He spread them before him, and immediately entered upon an explanation of their contents, going over them step by step until in spite of his unbelief, the young Marquis' face grew grave, anxious and perplexed, and he began to fear that his fair inheritance, his proud name and title, were in danger of being wrested from him after all.

He read the certificate signed so boldly by Joshua Grafton, bishop, and rector of St. John parish, and which had been given to Marion upon the completion of the marriage ceremony, and which also she had regarded only as so much worthless paper; yet some unaccountable instinct had prevented her destroying it whenever she had been tempted to do so.

He carefully read those extracts which the Marquis' son had just been presented to him, he said within himself that he would not yield his inheritance to this unknown child of Marion Vance—he would not give up his position, his wealth, his proud and honored name.

"It is a cunningly devised tale," he said, with a stern, white face, "and I defy the claim."

"I am sorry, my lord, for, with all my experience in the law, I must say that I never undertook a clearer case," "The Hon. Mr. Faxon replied, with the same unvarying politeness that he had displayed all through the interview.

"Nevertheless, I shall resist to the utmost of my ability. Tell your client so. He will have to fight a mighty battle before he will win one foot of Wyoliffe," the young Marquis returned, moodily.

"He is prepared to do so, if necessary, your lordship, for his mother's sake alone. He has expressed deep regret at their disappointment, but her honor and purity must be established at all events, whether he wins anything else or not. He will at once take measures to establish the validity of her marriage, that all who formerly knew her may know that no shadow of stain rests upon her character."

"Who is he? Where has he been all these years? Where is he now?" demanded the Marquis, with clouded brow.

He saw the reasonableness of what the young man contemplated, and knew that if those facts were once established there would be no hope left for him.

"Until about seven years ago he resided with his mother in—, a little town in the southwest of England. After her death, prompted by curiosity, he visited the place where she believed she had been so grossly deceived, and accidentally stumbled upon the evidence with which I have presented you to-day."

"Then his mother knew nothing of all this?" she believed up to the time of

her death that she had forfeited all claim to this property?" Mr. Tressalia inquired, gravely.

"Most assuredly, or she would have returned immediately to her father and vindicated herself, for the sake of her child's future."

"Why did he not present himself to his grandfather, then, as soon as he made this discovery?" the Marquis inquired, thinking it very strange that he had not done so.

"His first impulse was to do so. But he is very proud—he inherits all the fire and spirit of his race—and, feeling very sore and indignant at the treatment which his mother received from his grandfather, he naturally shrank from him. Moreover, he concluded that his first duty was to find the man who had so wronged him and her, and notify him of the validity of the marriage which he had supposed to be but a sham."

"Did he succeed?"

"He did not, although he used every means in his power to discover the man's place of residence, and whether he was living or dead. He would not now present his claim to this property, but recently learning of the death of his grandfather, he deemed it best to establish his identity and continue his search afterward."

"He is rather late in the day; he should have come immediately upon the Marquis' death, and before I had taken possession," Paul Tressalia said, with some excitement.

"He would have done so had it been possible; but it is only a fortnight since he learned that fact."

"On your honor as a gentleman, do you believe the statements you have made to me to-day?" the Marquis asked, after considering the matter in a long and thoughtful pause, and fixing his eyes keenly upon the lawyer.

"On my honor as a gentleman, and as a friend of the previous Marquis of Wyoliffe, I have not a single doubt upon the subject."

"These are only copies," Mr. Tressalia said, laying his hand upon the papers before him. "Have you seen the original written in the hand of Bishop Grafton?"

"I have examined them carefully."

"Does his signature there correspond with this upon the certificate of marriage?"

"Exactly; except that this is written in rather a bolder hand. I have also seen the sexton and questioned him closely."

Mr. Faxon returned, feeling deeply for the young man, who was to lose so much upon the proof of these facts.

"Where did you say the claimant is at this time?" Mr. Tressalia asked.

"Here at Wyoliffe, awaiting an interview with yourself. I think you will find him disposed to be very considerate and generous with you in his dealings; and you will acknowledge that, despite the obscurity in which he has been reared, he is an honor to your race. Shall I bring him to you now?" Mr. Faxon asked.

"If you please; I am ready to meet him now," Paul Tressalia said, with a weary sigh.

The lawyer immediately arose and left the room, but returned again almost instantly, accompanied by a tall, handsome stranger, whose peculiarly noble and attractive face at once riveted Paul Tressalia's eyes.

"My lord," the Hon. Archibald Faxon said, in his most gracious manner, "allow me to present to you my client, who is also your relative and by the name his mother gave him—Earle Wayne!"

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"Earle Wayne," repeated Paul Tressalia, in a startled tone, a sharp sudden pain running throughout his frame at the name as he remembered an interview with pretty Editha Dalton, and instantly knew that his rival for her love, and the claimant to his supposed inheritance, were one and the same person.

Then quickly recovering himself, he greeted his kinsman with the courtesy that always characterized him.

"Yes, sir," explained the lawyer, "every one is aware that the Marquis of Wyoliffe possessed another title—Viscount Wayne. When Miss Vance—or, I should now more properly say, Mrs. Summer—left her father's house, under the impression that she had been lured into a marriage, she could not endure the thought of retaining the name by which she had always been known, and feeling utterly unable to renounce every tie that bound her to the old life, she adopted the name of Mrs. Wayne as one little likely to attract attention, and when her son was born, bestowed upon him that of Earle Wayne, and which he always believed belonged to him by right until his mother lay upon her deathbed."

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AT R. McKAY & CO'S, Saturday, Jan. 5, 1907

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Also the Great Sale of White

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January News from the Whitewear Department

Ladies' Underskirts 98c

Ladies' White Skirts, with deep nainsook flounce trimmed with lace and insertion, protected by dust frill, regularly \$1.50, sale price 98c

Ladies' Cambric Drawers 25c

Ladies' Drawers, umbrella style, trimmed, hemstitched, tucks, special Saturday 25c

Cambric Corset Covers 25c

Cambric Corset Covers, full front, lace and insertion trimmed, very special, with an expression of incredulity upon his handsome face, Paul Tressalia drew up his chair to the table, to comply with his request.

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