

Mother and Her Baby Are Relieved of Eczema



DR. CHASE'S OINTMENT.
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The Countess of Landon.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Erect as an empress, with a proud smile on her face, the countess received her guests in the fashion of the old and ceremonious school. Her bow, the few well-chosen words with which she greeted each newcomer, were perfect, and worthy of the Georgian era.

Some of the young people who were quite awed by her stateliness and old-world grace, which offered so great a contrast to our modern free-and-easy, and alas! ungraceful mode.

Seymour led off the ball with the latest waltz. Guests still kept arriving—an endless stream, as it seemed—and the countess still stood at her post of duty, with the gracious smile and the old-world bow. According to strict etiquette, Madge ought to have stood by her side and helped to receive her guests, for was she not the wife of the countess's son—a daughter of the house?

But she sat apart, looking on, and almost hidden behind a group of young county squires who had not pluck enough to join in the first few dances, and who, so to speak, waited warming up.

Presently one guest began to whisper the inquiry which was in the minds of all: "Where is she?" for though they had come with the ostensible object of dancing, they had also come to see and hear Royce Landon's wife, the beautiful girl whose past was a mystery.

Her success at the last meet, the impression she had evidently created on Lord Rochester, had got bruited about, and the curiosity of those who had not seen her, and yet had heard so much of her, was at its height.

Madge, as she sat in her corner behind the young squire, heard her name mentioned now and again, and her heart beat painfully.

She saw Royce dancing with one and another of the daughters of the county, and it seemed to her, as she looked at his handsome, careless face, that he had clean forgotten her.

Strangely enough, in the midst of

all the splendor and gaiety, her mind wandered back to the forest glades—to Mether Katts, to Lottie, and Tony. She recalled them all with a stinging and tenderness. If she and Royce were only back with them! How gladly she would have exchanged these glittering balls for the old caravan—this dress, which had cost M. Worth so many hours of anxious thought, for the old brown winsey and scarlet shawl—to be sitting on the steps of the caravan, with her basket-work, with Royce at her feet and within reach of her hand.

A great yearning filled her heart, her eyes grew moist, and the gay scene grew dim and indistinct.

She was the one discordant note in the harmony of refinement and splendor, the humble piece of dett among the vases of porcelain.

As she sat in sad reverie, Lord Rochester entered the room. You would not catch his lordship arriving at a ball before the festival was in full swing. As the French philosopher remarked, he liked his world well stirred for him.

He bowed over the countess's jeweled hand with a grace second only to her own.

The countess received the compliment with a gracious smile. "Commendation from Lord Rochester is the height of all praise," she responded in the same tone.

He passed on, bowing to one and another, and the county folk, who knew him by name only, looked after him with keen interest and no little awe as he made his way slowly and leisurely through the crowd.

"That's the great Lord Rochester," whispered one girl to another, mentally hoping that some one might introduce him to her, and that he might give her just one dance. "He seems to be looking for some one, doesn't he? Will he dance, I wonder? They say that sometimes he will not dance all the evening."

It certainly appeared as if the great man were searching for some one, not at present in sight, for, though his carefully guarded eyes revealed nothing of what was passing in the brain behind them, his voice, and manner were absent and preoccupied when he answered those who addressed him.

Madge saw him threading his way

through the now crowded room, and noticed his wandering gaze. Suddenly he stood before her and all the preoccupation of his face vanished, and a look of satisfaction and pleasure in its place.

"At last!" he said, as he bowed over her hand.

"Have you been looking for me?" she said, with the simplicity of innocence.

"For no one else, I assure you," he said, touched by her child-like candor. "Am I so fortunate as to obtain a dance also? Will you dance this next with me?"

Madge held out her hand, which was empty, excepting for Seymour's name, and Rochester wrote his own down twice.

She put her hand on his arm and led her from her corner. They presented a very fair sample of our modern rage. He was over six feet, dressed "as only Rochester can dress," as the men said, despairingly, and Madge who, in her harmony of black and crimson and fresh young beauty, would have attracted attention alone, smiled rather than lost by the proximity of her handsome partner.

Gradually all eyes were directed toward her, and one and another whispered, "Who is she?" and when the answer came, "It's Royce Landon's wife," the interest almost grew into excitement.

The dance was a waltz, and the soft, dulcet strains of Waldteufel were already floating through the air.

"I am afraid I dance very badly," said Madge.

Her face was pale, and she lifted her lovely eyes to his with a touch of appeal in them.

"I was just going to make the same confession and throw myself on your mercy," said the most finished dancer of the day. "If we break down it will be my fault, remember."

As he spoke, he mentally swore that there should be no break down if he had to lift her bodily from the floor.

But he need not have feared. Before they had taken a dozen turns, he murmured: "I am afraid I am not making game of me, Mrs. Landon? You waltz divinely."

Madge shook her head.

"It is because you help me," she said, gratefully. "I know—I felt that."

"You need no assistance," he said. "You dance as well as you ride."

Madge laughed. Her face had lost its paleness and had a delicious color in it. She was giddy, and the movement of the waltz, the divine music, the gentle courtesy of her partner, were having their natural effect upon her young spirits.

"Why," she said, "I have only learned this last fortnight. Irene—Lady Tresillian—taught me."

"She had an apt pupil," he said. "Are you tired?"

She looked up at him with mute surprise. Tired, she who had walked—could walk—a score of miles without the slightest fatigue—tired of gliding round to such music for a few moments only!

Her smile answered him. "Let us go on then," he said. "Let me tell you that a man does not get such a partner often."

As they danced, he saw, though Madge was too unsophisticated and too absorbed to notice it, that they were the objects of general attention and interest, and his manner toward her became more deferential and reverential. A man of the world, he guessed how matters stood with her, and though his greatest admirers would have hesitated in calling Lord Rochester a good man, he had, like the worst of us, his generous moments, and this was one of them. He would stand by this simple girl—woman whom his friend Royce had picked up—where?—stand by her until he had raised her to a pedestal from which none should throw her. He could do it, he knew, and he would.

They danced the waltz out, and as the music died away, Madge stopped with a deep sigh.

"I had no idea it was so delicious," she said, half apologetically.

Lord Rochester smiled.

"What would most of us give for your capacity for pleasure," he said. "It is all new to me," she said, gently. "All new and strange."

"May it long continue so," he said, fervently. "Ah, have they come?" he added, under his breath.

"Who?" she asked.

(To be continued.)

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