

## Elaine the Fair

A New Serial Story of Absorbing Interest.

"I am very glad you did," Gracilia said. "I could not sleep at the beginning of the night, and might not have been awake by luncheon-time if you had not come. I shall not take tea, thank you, Maggie, and you may bring my breakfast to my sitting-room in twenty minutes. To think I should have slept till past nine!"

Maggie laughed at Miss Latimer's tone of consternation and carried the tray away. As she reached the door Gracilia called her.

"Maggie, was there every one about, Wayland Manor called Markham?"

"Markham? Yes, to be sure, miss! He was Mr. Verinder's own man."

### CHAPTER VII.

Gracilia came back in the afternoon from a long walk, which she had taken to brace herself up after her sleepless hours. She wore the same pale-gray costume and a big feathered hat of a darker shade, and looked lovely with her heightened color and animated expression. Elaine had again declined to accompany her, saying she was saving all her strength to entertain her guests. She was immersed, as usual in Gracilia had never yet visited. It began to strike her that she saw very little of her cousin, and that, as far as companionship went, Elaine had been as well off before she came.

A murmur of voices and a tinkle of tea cups as she entered the hall apprised her that visitors had arrived. There were several people there, strangers to her, and she paused a moment before she advanced. Then her heart gave a jump and seemed to stand still. Colin Grantly was advancing to meet her.

"You are looking very well," he said eagerly.

"How are you?" she asked, furious to find herself blushing. "I did not know you were here."

"Why I told you yesterday that Mr. Grantly was coming," cried Elaine, looking at her with surprise. "Mrs. Beresford, this is my cousin, Miss Latimer, who has been very kind to my loneliness and come to stay with me."

Mrs. Beresford, a fashionable and distinguished looking woman, bowed slightly as she turned to take a cup of tea from a gentleman whom Gracilia discovered later to be Lord Brixton.

"Lisabel, I need scarcely introduce Miss Latimer to you," said Elaine. "My letters lately have been about nothing and nobody else. I know you and she will be great friends, for you are kindred spirits."

"Delightful!" said Miss Beresford. She held out her hand with a frank smile to Gracilia. "It saves so much trouble when these things are settled, and announced to us. I dare say it would have taken me at least three days to find out that we were kindred spirits, and now it is all comfortably arranged without any trouble. As to your letters, my dear Elaine, I am afraid they were neither as numerous nor as voluminous as people would imagine from what you have said. Still, I own to having heard something of Miss Latimer."

"What are the marks, Miss Verinder?" asked Lord Brixton. "Cast yourself into a trance and tell me if I have any kindred spirits here. I am pining to know."

"Lisabel may be one," said Elaine, pointing. "I am certain."

"How jolly! And it follows that Miss Latimer is another. How do you do it? Have you any private divining rod?"

"I shan't tell! I am descended from a great enchanter who bequeathed to me his book of magic spells. So let everyone beware!"

"You are a magician in one direction at least," Colin Grantly said. "My friend Eberhardt is fast in your toils. He has no words to express his ecstasy over your voice."

"Do you mean the great composer?" asked Lord Brixton.

"Yes; he said Miss Verinder, if she went on the operatic stage would electrify the universe, or words to that effect."

"How was it, Elaine, that I never knew this?" cried Gracilia. "I did not even know you were musical!"

"You never asked. I sing every day, but it is in my own rooms. I never could bear an audience, and it was quite by accident that Professor Eberhardt heard me. But if you like, and if you let me manage things in my own way, I will sing for you this evening."

A chorus of thanks followed, and when it was over, Gracilia found Colin Grantly beside her.

"I knew you were here," he said in a low voice, emphasizing the pronouns. "I should not have come but for that."

"Well, I had not the least idea about you."

"Miss Verinder's announcement does not seem to have made a deep impression."

"It certainly did not. But then I don't believe she made it. She mentioned your name some time ago, but that was all—not that it matters."

"How do you like—"

"My place? I am very comfortable, but I am no use."

"What did you expect? A person like Miss Verinder must require very little."

"I expected to earn my bread, and I am not doing that."

"Your cousin must want society. Lady Annandale is a beautifully got-up figure-head. She has one smile and no conversation."

"You are very rude. But really I see scarcely anything of my cousin. We meet at luncheon and dinner, occasionally drive or walk together, sometimes spend an hour in the drawing-room after dinner, and that is all. I have never heard her sing, and the piano downstairs has never been opened since I came."

"Perhaps she knows as little about you? She may not suspect that you are musical."

"Well, perhaps not. But such a life is not to my mind. I shall stay here three months, and if things are the same I shall leave. Is Miss Beresford a nice girl?"

"They are all new to me. Mrs. Beresford invited me for a fortnight, and I accepted for certain reasons. Then Miss Verinder's invitation to Wayland Manor came, and we came on here."

"But you must have formed some opinion of your hostess," Gracilia urged, warned by his look that it would be better to keep the conversation out of personal channels.

"Miss Beresford seems a nice girl—not handsome, but distinguished and all that."

"She has a very interesting face. Those grey eyes with her black hair and olive complexion are original. She is not in the least like her mother."

"Her stepmother, you mean, I fancy Brixton is smitten in that quarter."

"Don't gossip! So Mrs. Beresford is not Lisabel's mother?"

"No, nor would she be obliged to you for thinking that. Miss Lisabel could be her daughter."

"I am glad she is not. Miss Beresford's mother must have been a charming woman that her successor is not?"

"Mr. Grantly, we want your vote," said the young mistress of the house, coming towards them. "Shall we celebrate my birthday by a dance, or by a tableaux, or what?"

"I vote for 'what!'" Lord Brixton said, lounging up.

"Don't be absurd!" said Elaine. "If you don't behave yourself you shall be condemned to make out a programme of something delightful that no one ever heard of before."

"Oh, a dance, by all means, in that case! The last tableaux I took part in made an old man of me."

"Yes, I wondered!" said Miss Beresford. "But will your infirmities allow you to join in the giddy dance?"

"They would not join the noble army of wallflowers! That is the plan I had up my sleeve."

"How horrid of you!" cried Elaine. "If we have a dance we shall need the men we can get. Mr. Grantly, do you vote for the dance? Well, that decides it."

"When is your birthday?"

"In a fortnight—barely time to see after our dresses. Lisabel, what will you wear?"

"That must remain a dead secret—at least until I have thought of it myself. My dear, you have sprung the dance on us. How could we decide on dresses all of a sudden? I must say Lisabel takes very little interest," said her stepmother discontentedly. "She wore a green dress at her last dance—bright, odious green. You can fancy what she looked like."

"Oh, you must not wear green at my dance!" said Elaine severely. "I hope you did not let her bring the dress with her. Mrs. Beresford, I am sure Mr. Grantly agrees with me that it is a woman's duty to make her dress one of her first considerations. Don't you, Mr. Grantly?"

"If every woman had your genius it might. It would be energy expended in vain in some cases."

"Meaning mine," said Lisabel serenely. "But I promise not to appear in the odious green frock."

They separated soon after, and Gracilia invited Miss Beresford to her sitting-room for a chat before dinner.

"What a perfect room! It was here poor Lucy spent most of her time."

"Why poor Lucy? Do you know anything about her? I have wished so much to know."

"Has Elaine not told you? Then, perhaps, I ought not to have mentioned it."

"Elaine does not care to speak of Miss Carden, but just on that account I am consumed with curiosity. Is there a secret?"

"I don't know. I was in India with my father at the time, and I don't quite know the details. Lucy was engaged to Sir Everard Denham, and they were to have been married in a couple of months' time. Elaine invited me down to Wayland Manor—or so I heard in a roundabout way—that she was teaching in a school in Surrey, but I do not know whether that is true or not. I intend, if I can, to find out if I have made up my mind to stick by Lucy, no matter what comes or goes."

"Why, is there any talk about her?"

"Well, of course people say there must have been some reason for her conduct, and sometimes she tells Elaine knows more than she tells. She seemed to be fond of Sir Everard, but she shied aloof way, and he certainly did nothing to make her wish to be poor, proud, and independent."

"What do you mean by saying Elaine knows something?"

"Oh, I could hardly explain! She gives me that impression, that is all. They lived together here for a good

while, and two girls generally know each other's affairs. Lucy may have asked Elaine to be silent—that is all I mean."

It was evident Miss Beresford did not wish to pursue the subject, and Gracilia followed her lead.

"You are a great traveller, I believe, Miss Beresford?"

"My father, General Beresford, had an appointment in India, and I kept house for him for the last two years. Then he married, and the climate did not suit my stepmother's health. We are home for good now, and I am doing a round of country visiting. This is the last house, and we go to our own place then, where I hope I shall see you later on."

"Thanks so much, but my movements depend on my cousin's. I am her companion, you know."

"What a shame! Yes, I heard all about it, and the worst of it is that it is nobody's fault, so that you have not the satisfaction of wreaking your vengeance on any one. Can you guess who told me the story?"

"I suppose it was Mr. Grantly," she said, trying not to color, and failing. "He is the only person who knows us both."

"Precisely, my dear! And I listened with proper sympathy. That is why he likes me so much. What a dear little carved door! Is it a cupboard?"

Gracilia did not at once answer. She was debating with herself whether she should tell her new friend of the discovery she had made the previous night. Lisabel struck her as being sensible, sincere, and a true friend to the friendless Lucy Carden. She made her resolve on the spur of the moment. The loneliness of the last few weeks had been weighing on her, and she longed for some one to whom she might speak freely. She rose and, going to a drawer, took a bunch of keys from it and, selecting one, opened the press.

"I don't know whether you think me silly or not," she said, "but we have been talking of Lucy Carden, and I want to show you something."

She brought the box containing the paper to the table and smoothed out the creased folds. Lisabel looked at her when she had read it.

"What is it?" she asked.

"I don't know, only this was Lucy Carden's room, and the 'Markham' spoken of there was Mr. Verinder's own man. I thought this might have been a letter from Mr. Verinder asking to see Lucy alone, and that he had something to tell her. It was only last night I found it. I had been thinking so much about Lucy. Perhaps it is all nonsense, but I can't help feeling as if there was some 'thing' in it."

"Keep it," Miss Beresford said, putting the scrap of paper back in the box and turning the key. "I shall find Lucy; that I am determined on."

"What are you two plotting?" cried a gay voice behind them. "We are all going out, and we want you both. I have been searching the whole house for you, Lisabel. I might have known that I should find you here. I thought you told me you had no jewelry; Gracilia, and yet here you are with your casket on the table."

(To be Continued)



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Winnipeg, March 29—True bills against Sir Rodmond Roblin, Hon. R. Colwell, Hon. James H. Howden and Thos. Kelly were returned to Mr. Justice Prendergast in Assize Court yesterday afternoon. The Grand Jury which has been investigating for some weeks charges against the construction of the Manitoba Parliament Buildings, recommended that trials be held in June, and a date be set for argument, since it is expressed desire of the defence the charges be held immediately.

True bills are found against Sir Rodmond and Messrs. Colwell and Howden, two of his former Cabinet Ministers, on charges of conspiracy to defraud, of the corruption of witnesses, of attempting to corrupt witnesses. A true bill is also found against Sir Rodmond on a charge of destruction of public documents, on another count of the attempted destruction of public documents. A true bill is found against Thos. Kelly, contractor for the buildings, who is charged with defrauding and obtaining money under false pretences, and perjury. Kelly is present in Chicago, fighting extradition to Canada.

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