



LADY ELEANOR: LAWBREAKER

(Continued from page 9)

and pay my respects to Mrs. Sheridan. Adieu, God bless you."

"Ah, Charlie, Charlie, no tryst, say you!"

"I gave you my word of honour there was none. If you doubt it, I will run you through."

"No, no, in heaven's name! Where metal is concerned, 'tis gold, and not steel, I yearn for. To be called out by the best swordsman in London, on the very eve of a fortune! That were an anti-climax indeed. I'd refuse, Charlie. But I'm no marplot. Good-bye to you." Then he shook his head. "Oh, Charlie, Charlie!" he said laughing, and walked away.

THERE was no answering mirth in the eyes that watched his retreat.

"By the plague," muttered Brandon, "I never before knew Dick so tiresome." Then he dismissed Sheridan from his mind, and turned to greet Lady Eleanor, who, absorbed in her own meditations, had not seen him.

"Good-morning, Eleanor."

At the sound of his voice the girl looked up quickly, and faced him with a little gasp of astonishment.

"Oh!—I was not expecting to meet any one!" she said. Recovering her self-possession, she advanced, holding out her hand. "They say that every one meets every one else sooner or later in London," remarked Brandon, seeking for an easy conversational opening.

"Is our meeting by chance, then?"

"No; I was waiting for you."

"Waiting for me?"

"Yes; I have been here this hour or more."

"How did you know I was in London?"

"As every one meets every one in London, it naturally follows that every one must some time come to London. If Eleanor came to London, it was but natural she should inhabit her own house. If any one in London were interested in Eleanor, he need but to pass that house each morning, when the windows silently would tell him whether she were in residence or not."

"How charmingly courteous of him, and how indefatigable," said Eleanor, laughing a little. "I need not tell you, then, that I arrived early in the week."

"As for three mornings I have wandered in your neighbourhood through this park, the information is superfluous, Nell."

"And why was I kept so long in ignorance of the great favour bestowed upon me? I thought only royalty claimed the silent attendance of one so highly placed as the Earl of Brandon."

"There are always two Queens in England, Nelly, when a man's in love."

"What reply do you expect to such a remark as that?"

"The answer is 'yes,' that three-lettered word which proves that luck's in odd numbers. 'Tis the only word in the lovers' dictionary, you know."

"How should I know? The language would appear to be very limited."

"In its limitation lies its delight, and that word is often spoken by the eyes long before the lips utter it. It is a magic word, like a conjurer's packet, from which all the delights of earth may be produced—yes, and those of heaven borrowed to make up full measure."

"Your mornings in the park would seem to be employed in composing gallant speeches. St. James' Park must be an inspiring place."

"Park? 'Tis no park. The moment that you set foot in it, it is the Garden of Eden."

"With a silent Eve," she laughed. "That were Paradise indeed. It required three days to break the spell and unloosen her tongue."

"It required courage, Nelly. My first progenitor in the Garden was so quickly thrust out that I dared not venture till now."

WELL, your belated valour appears to have wrought no evil consequence. If this is the Garden of Eden, your words have proved no magician's incantation to waft it into space."

"No; they have been no open sesame to reveal new wonders."

"Your visions are so ethereal, Charles, that you make me ashamed to mention my more earthly dream. Do you know why I come here every morning?"

"I can guess. Your hatred of London drives you to even a semblance of the country."

"Semblance of the country? Fie upon you. Where is your Garden of Eden now?"

"I said when you were here, Eleanor. When you are gone, 'tis but St. James'

Park again, and this lake not the clear waters of Damascus eulogised in Scripture, but merely Rosamond's Pond sung of by the courtly poet Waller—the lake of disastrous love, they call it."

"I do not hate London," protested Eleanor, going back to his former remark.

"You once said you did with a scorn that tingles in my memory, for I was part of your contempt."

"Ah, I was overwrought when I said that. I fear I have some excuses to make, and some misunderstandings to clear away. But London fascinates me. I wander about it at night like the Sultan in the Arabian Tales, and regard it with ever increasing wonder."

"Wander about at night? Who goes with you?"

"That would spoil the enchantment; I wander alone."

"Alone! Merciful Heaven! Eleanor, you cannot mean that!"

"Why not?"

"Why not? Alone in the streets of London at night? Nell, you amaze me!"

"You speak as though I had penetrated an African jungle."

"The deadliest African jungle is as Brandon village High Street compared with night in London. Lady Eleanor Beaumont strolling along through the darkened streets of London! Good God, you must not do that again!"

"Must not?"

"No; of course you must not. I forbid it."

"I do not recognize your right to say what I shall or shall not do in that peremptory fashion."

"I am the head of our house, and I ask you never again to go into the streets of London unprotected."

Eleanor drew herself up in anger, but laughed, almost at once.

"Charles, do you know why I forgive you for your sudden presumption?" she asked with no trace of resentment. "For the moment you were a boy again—the boy who tyrannized over me on the shores of Brandon Water. 'You shall not!' you would say, and stamp your foot. I fear I spoiled you, Charlie, by being your willing little slave, fetching and carrying at your command."

"I was an unmitigated little beast."

"Oh, not more than you are now, I imagine, when the polish wears a little thin. I shall have nothing said against that boy, even by myself. When I sank on the grass weeping—"

"The brute!" interjected Brandon.

"—he would throw himself at my feet, and promise to be an angel did I but desist, and sometimes he was good for as much as half an hour after. Indeed, he would willingly have spent his life for me, though he might have boxed my ears before taking the fatal plunge."

NELLY, you make me jealous of that unmannerly cub."

Eleanor dreamily indicated the opposite shore of Rosamond's Pond.

"See, over yonder is our favourite playground, and there is Brandon Water, and if those two towers of Westminster Abbey were but one, it would be Brandon Church."

"That is true, now you point it out. So, for all you say of London's fascination, you come here because you are lonely for Brandon Park?"

"Perhaps."

"And because you think of that objectionable boy who threw himself at your feet over yonder. I am jealous of him, and filled with a loathing for him. But let the little scoundrel go. I'll say no more of him. So you come here every morning merely to visit your own Park?"

"My own Park? 'Tis not mine, but yours. 'Twas yours, and despite myself you have thrust it upon me. I walk your halls and wring my hands; your revenge has been complete. If you, having the will in your possession, had shown it, and confounded me thus, 'twould have not been so cruel, but you waited until I sent for it. You proved to me that I was mean enough to use that testament to stop the sale. Why did you not throw the parchment in the fire?"

"Impossible. Brandon Hall was never mine. First it was my father's; then it was yours."

"Not once in all the centuries had it descended but to a Brandon. Why was it not entailed? I suppose it seemed impossible that any lord of Brandon should leave it to a woman. What right have I to stand between a Brandon and his heritage? Take it, Charles, now; 'tis not too late. Sell it, or do what you wish with it, and build Sheridan a dozen theatres if he need them." (Continued on page 42)

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