



**Only a Beggar;  
—BUT—  
A Queen Among Women**

**CHAPTER XXII.**

"No, dearie. If I'd refused—and I did try to, God knows!—he'd have set the police on me. And there's no getting away nowadays without a fair start and wonderful luck. He'd only to drop a line to Scotland Yard, and the hue and cry would have been out; every port would have been watched, and I should have been lag—caught and sent back to finish my time. No; there was no help for it. But I made him swear that it was the only job he'd expect of me, that he'd let me go after it was done. I was afraid of him; but that wasn't all. As I said, I wanted to see my daughter. Why—his hands clenched and his face worked—I'd have gone through fire and water to see you. I did go through worse than that; I risked Portland and a life of hell in coming back."

He was silent for a moment or two, and sat gazing at the ground moodily, almost listlessly; then he lifted his great head.

"An' now I'll go again. I'll get out of the country. And I promise you, missie, you shan't see me any more. You're a great lady now. Was you visiting here, at this grand place, dearie?" he asked meekly, with a kind of wondering awe.

Diana was silent for a moment. She could not bring herself to tell him that she was—ah, no, she was not now!—had been engaged to marry Lord Dalesford.

"Yes," she said, her head bent. "That's all right; that's as it should be," he said with grotesque satisfaction. "You're a lady, every inch of you; you take after your mother, though, strange to say, you ain't like her in looks. You stay on here, just keep on as you've been going. There's plenty of money, and if there wasn't I could make some more. I've got the knack of it." He raised his head with a humble kind of pride. "I'll send you more, ever so much more—"

Diana turned to him with a gesture of despair.

"This money, ah, this money!" Suddenly: "Why did you not offer some to the man, the wretch—who drove you back to crime?"

Garling shook his head. "It wouldn't have been of any use. He'd have bled me to death, and spent every penny. He'd have wanted to know how I got it, have learned where I'd been, have dug up the past, and found out about you. I'd rather



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work as his slave for the rest of my life than he should do that."

The simple statement went to Diana's heart; and she flung up her hands before her face, crying:

"Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do?"

"Just what I say, missie," he answered for her. "Go on as you've been going. No one will know. I'd rather have my tongue cut out—besides, dearie, my rough way of speaking ain't fit for a lady to hear. No, no; don't you be afraid. I shall never ask to see you again—"

"But don't you see that—that," she said with suppressed anguish—"that my place is by your side? I am your daughter; and wherever her father is his child should be. I must go with you. Yes, I must go with you!"

He sprang to his feet, his arms outstretched, his rugged face working; then as, despite herself, she shrank back from him with a faint cry of terror, he stopped and let his arms fall, as he had let them fall once before.

"Don't you think that, Diana," he said quietly, "I'm an ignorant man, but I know better what's due to you than that. You come along and live with me! Why—his voice grew hoarse—"you couldn't do it. It wouldn't be right. Why, I might be took at any moment. When I go to this man that's got the pull of me and tell him I've chucked the job—"

He stopped and shrugged his shoulders, significantly. "No, no! I'll go my way, and you'll go yours, missie. And if you give me a thought once and again, why, think of me as if I'd really died out there in the wilds. Think of me—not as you saw me last night, not as you see me now, but as the honest man as worked hard to scrape some money together for his little girl, to make a lady of her."

"Ah, don't you understand?" Diana cried with a choking sob. "It is because you worked for me, because you were driven to—to do this for my sake, that I cannot leave you." He waved his hand and smiled grimly.

"It 'd break your heart," he said with the simplicity of insight and conviction. "You couldn't stand it. Every time you looked at me and heard me speak—no, no! From this moment we're standing here, I want to be as good as dead to you. That's just it—dead. As I ought to be. Why, I ain't fit to touch you; me drag you down to what I've sunk to! No, dearie, I'm bad, cruel bad, but I'm not as bad as that."

They stood in silence. During the whole, tragic interview he had been listening warily, and his eyes had scanned the wood with keen watchfulness. Now, as he heard a laborer whistling as he skirted the wood on his way to work, Garling drew himself up and looked at his watch.

"People beginning to get about," he said in a low voice. "I must be off. I'm going to walk through the lane to the junction. I can catch a train there. If no one goes to the safe or the window, nothing will be discovered till I'm clean out of the country. It's—its good-by, dearie. Good-by forever."

Duty called to Diana; but, as if he saw in her eyes the struggle that was going on within her, he shook his head.

"No, no; I go alone. I'm—I'm your father, and I tell you that—that I won't have you with me. Good-by!"

His hoarse voice broke as he turned away, and Diana went to him slowly, as if her limbs were leaden. "Good-by," she faltered. "If you wish—if you—"

"No," he said, understanding her. "No; I'm not fit to touch you, dearie, much less kiss you. Think—think—no, don't think of me. Try and forget!"

He was gone, and Diana sank down on the tree, overwhelmed with despair. What should she do? Whither should she turn to escape from—herself, from the self which had become loathsome, degraded?

To go back to the castle—to Vane—was impossible. Vane! She could think of him now. And the remembrance of his love, of his perfect, passionate love for her, his pride in her, was a torture almost too great to be borne.

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think what he would do of her, let him curse her as the most false, the most faithless of women; but he must not know how vile a creature he had nearly made his wife.

The daughter of a criminal! To think of it, to dwell upon it, meant madness. She must find relief in action or break down utterly, and so reveal the awful truth.

She looked at her watch. An hour, an hour of dreadful torture, had been spent; and time—time was so priceless. She tried to form some plan; but her only idea was one of instant flight; and, impelled by the terror of discovery, by the passionate desire to spare the man who loved her, she staggered to her feet and went giddily, uncertainly, through the wood toward the railway station.

As she went she tried to piece together the jumbled, hideous puzzle of her fate. She knew now the cause of her aunt's nervous apprehension, of her agitation when Mr. Fielding's first letter had come. She knew now why that astute lawyer had, with pitying consideration, slurred over the story of her father's career. Those remittances, the money that had come in the days of their poverty, had come from her father. And the vast fortune, some of which she had spent so lavishly, the immense sum which she knew the lawyers were settling upon Vane, all, all had come from that crime-stained hand, the hand of the common thief and burglar.

Her father! Half blinded she made her way, fighting, praying, for sufficient strength to carry her into hiding, to some place where she could be alone to cover under her shame and ease her broken heart.

There was no passenger at the little station; and the porter eyed her curiously as he touched his cap.

She turned away and bit her lip to bring back some color to it, and forced a smile, as she said:

"I am going to London on—on sudden business. Will you get me a ticket, please?"

The man got a ticket, told her that the train was overdue, and, looking round, asked for the luggage.

She told him that it would follow; and when the train drew up he put her in a first-class compartment, shut the door quietly and respectfully and stood by the window, in case she should have any further use for him.

It seemed to her as if the train would never move; but at last it left the station, and, leaning back, she shut her eyes that she might not see the turrets of the castle, the house



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which held the man she loved better than life itself; the man she was leaving forever.

**CHAPTER XXIII.**

Dalesford happened to breakfast alone that morning. Lady Selina always partook of an apology for that meal in bed, and Mabel and Bertie had scrambled through a hasty repast of fish, ham, and eggs, and the Scotch of Scotch marmalade at eight o'clock, and had gone off fishing; fishing, because Lady Selina, while laying an embargo on the two young people walking or riding alone together, had forgotten to include angling!

Dalesford looked wistfully at the empty chair beside him as he took up his letters, then sighed with a thrill of satisfaction as he reflected that in a little while, a few short days, he would be entitled to take up his darling's breakfast. If she desired to have it in her room. A few short days! He looked before him musingly, his heart glowing within him at the thought. To have the right to be with her always; never to part again; to be able to call her whenever it pleased him, to gratify her every wish, to be able to say "my wife!"

And he had laughed at matrimony, had pitied the amorous husband! But then he had so much greater an excuse than most men; she was so beautiful, so sweet, so altogether to be desired. Why, there was not a man who did not envy him, not a man who knew him who did not consider him the luckiest man on earth. His pearl among women! He was glad she was resting; but he wondered whether she would be late in coming down, and he felt particularly lonely.

He had arranged to drive her to a distant part of the estate, to meet the factor and discuss with him a proposal to cut down some trees, and she was looking forward to a long morning with his beloved. Not many months ago Dalesford would not have dreamed of meeting the factor on business; but, as Mabel had said, love had wrought a marvelous change in him; he had caught from Diana a novel and surprising regard for small details, and the people on the estate were delighted at the interest which the young laird was showing in his future property.

When he had finished his breakfast, he lit a cigar and went down to the stables and ordered a dog-cart with Diana's favorite horse; a dog-cart, because it did not necessitate a groom; and he and Diana would be alone. He remained at the stables, looking at the horses and talking to the head man, for half-an-hour; as he returned to the house he met Janet coming down the stairs into the smaller hall. She had some lace, which she was going to clean, in her hands, and she dropped his lordship a little morning curtsy.

"Good morning, Janet," said Dalesford. "Is your mistress in her room still?"

Janet hesitated a moment, then she replied directly to the question. It was not her place to explain that Diana had been out, but had, as Janet thought, returned.

"Yes, my lord. She is asleep. That is, I knocked at the door and got no answer. My mistress did not have a very good night—"

Dalesford looked anxiously instantly. (To be Continued.)

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To cure him of this, the Emperor sent him in "arrest," the only convenient place at the moment being the large dining-room table, under which he was told to crawl. After a time, he was hidden to come out again, which he did, but with all his clothes removed excepting his under garments.  
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