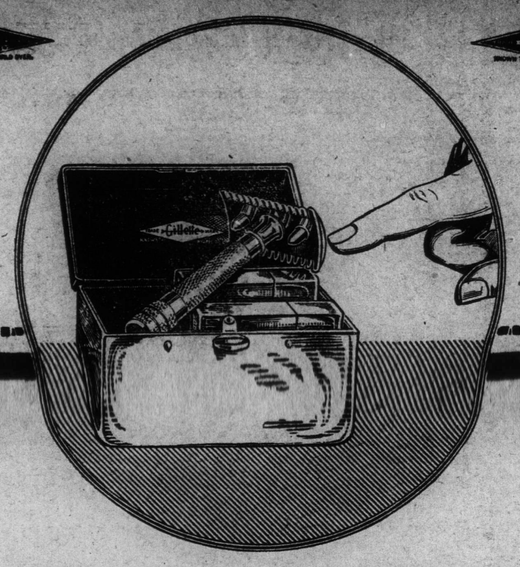

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Countess Westerleigh

CHAPTER XXXI.

"How, wonderful?" she asked, with a cold hateur tinged with a shade of anxiety.

"Well, he seems to make himself necessary to everybody with whom he comes in contact, or at any rate to any one to whom he takes a fancy. For those persons he doesn't care about, I imagine Senley Tyers would not wag a finger to save them from drowning. Then you see a great deal of him?" he asked, half absently.

"He is here very often—yes," she said, with an air of indifference.

The old earl entered and saved her from Vane's further questioning, and she drew a breath of relief.

"Ah, Tempest!" said the earl, hobbling toward him and extending a gouty hand. "What beastly weather! Very good of you to take pity on us and come out in such a devil of a night, and—halloo!" he broke off, and stared at the still haggard face of the man he, perhaps, liked best in the world. "What on earth have you been doing with yourself? You look as if you'd been on a twelve-month's racket, or half starved in a coal mine," and he knitted his shaggy brows.

Vane laughed, and the old man frowned still more darkly as he noticed the absence of the wonted careless ring in the laugh.

"Do I look as if I had not washed myself?" he said.

"You look as if you ought to be in bed or—or a fever hospital," returned the earl, grimly. "I suppose she wanted you to come here to-night. Women have no consciences. Well, now you are here, I hope you'll get a good dinner. You look to me as if a couple of bottles of port would be of some service. Barks"—he turned to the butler—"better give Mr. Tempest some of that yellow seal. And see that he gets plenty of it."

Vane laughed as he gave his arm to Lady Florence.

"I wonder why people with the gout always want all the rest of the world, and their friends in particular, to have it. I suppose it's the old story of the fox who lost his tail."

But though he laughed carelessly, he was not insensible of the old man's kindly interest.

There were only the three, and they dined in a small room, as warm as toast, with the subdued light of wax candles shining through crimson silk. The dinner was perfect. Lady Florence's voice softly modulated and harmonizing with the subdued light, and the atmosphere of repose fell upon his ear like soothing music. The poor fellow grew brighter-eyed, and his face less wan and gray as the dinner proceeded, and he managed to talk in something like his old manner. Lady Florence watched him without seeming to do so, and her own eyes grew brighter. What had happened to him during his long absence ,and where had that absence been spent? She had suffered agonies of jealousy during the last weeks while he had been away, but as the dinner made its stately yet cozy and luxurious progresss she forgot her doubts and fears and basked in the happiness his presence —his nearness—caused in her.

She lingered long after the butler had brought the special yellow-sealed port, and then, as Vane opened the door for her, said, in a soft, inviting voice:

"Don't let papa keep you too long. I will have the most splendid fire you ever saw made in the drawing-room."

Vane went back to the table, and the butler set a fresh bottle beside him, after filling his glass, and the earl exhorted him to drink.

"It will do you more good than claret, and as for the gout, why you'd better have that than the beastly cold you seem struggling with. Pass me the bottle. I'll change it and take half a glass myself—half a glass, mind—now Florence has gone."

He chuckled, and sipped the priceless wine with the keen enjoyment attending all forbidden indulgence and chatted genially.

"By the way," he said, after a pause, "what the devil does this new prank of Westleigh's mean?"

"What prank?" asked Vane.

"Why, it appears that he has gone in for coaching again, and has actually undertaken to run the stage from Westleigh to Newton Petrock, and is going to drive himself three days a week. It's all in the Morning Post."

"I haven't seen or heard anything of him for some time," said Vane. "He was always fond of driving, and, I suppose, thinks that tooling a four-in-hand is better than doing nothing."

"Well, there's no accounting for tastes," commented Lord Warlock. "I should have thought that he could have got something better to do than playing at omnibus driver. It was all very well before he came into the title, but he ought to settle down now. By the way, Vane," he broke off, eying the ruby-colored wine in his glass with reflective satisfaction, "isn't it time you settled down? Don't think I want to be impertinent; but it seems to me that you ought to have had your fling by this time and be ready to harvest that crop of wild oats you've been sowing so plentifully."

Vane remained silent, and the earl went on in the quiet, and most affectionate manner which was, perhaps, reserved for Vane Tempest alone of all his friends:

"I know you are not old, that you could very easily sow another crop or two. But is it worth while? That's the question. You are the sort of man who ought to have a stake in the country and do your best to keep the good old Constitution moving."

Vane smiled rather grimly.

"You speak as if I had only to throw the handkerchief, sir," he said.

The earl looked at him thoughtfully.

"I don't know that," he said. "But I've always found that a man can find a wife if he sets about looking for her seriously. I should have thought you would be rather popular with the women. You used to be, I fancy. Perhaps you've lost ground lately. A man can't afford to drop the world for months at a time. At any rate he can't expect to pick it up again when he chooses. You look jaded and bored. You'd better marry, my dear fellow. I don't say you won't cease to be bored, but at least you will have home comforts and some one to look after beside yourself, and that's better than having some one to look after you."

In speaking thus, Lord Warlock at scarcely need be said, was not thinking of his daughter Florence. If he had thought of her and guessed her passion for Vane, he would not have spoken. Nor did Vane connect her with the earl's advice. Every word the worldly wise old man said recalled Nora to Vane's mind. There was his wife—the wife of his heart—if he could but find her and induce her to return his love.

They finished the bottle and went into the drawing room. There the earl made straight for his chair, and settled himself for slumber without the least attempt at concealment. Lady Florence was seated in a low chair by the fire, and another was drawn up close beside her. She welcomed Vane with a smile, and pointed to the vacant chair.

"Come and roast."

"Oh, I'm warm enough now," he said; but he sunk into the chair and drew the breath of comfort.

The wind could be heard as it swept the rain-deluged streets, and the sound made the warm, softly lighted room all the more comfortable by contrast. He sat nursing his leg in his favorite attitude, and gazing at the fire while she talked. She laid herself out to amuse him; recounted all the gossip which had prevailed during his absence; told him little anecdotes about the people they both knew—who had married whom, and who were likely to be divorced.

(To be Continued.)

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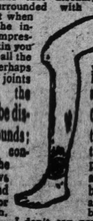

With Wounds that discharge or otherwise, perhaps surrounded with inflammation and swollen, that when you press your finger on the inflamed part it leaves the impression under the skin your leaves which defies all the remedies you have tried. Perhaps your knees are swollen, the joints being ulcerated, the same with the ankles, round which the skin may be discoloured, or there may be wounds; the disease, if allowed to continue, will deprive you of the power to walk. You may have attended various hospitals and been told your case is hopeless, or advised to submit to amputation, but do not, for I can cure you. I don't say perhaps, but I will.

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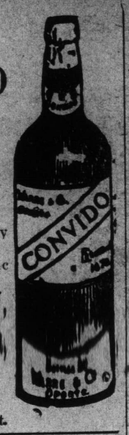

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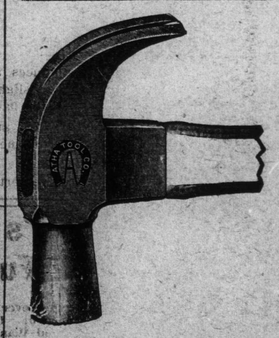

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This illustration calls for TWO separate patterns which will be mailed to any address on receipt of 10c. FOR EACH pattern insilver or stamps.

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Composed of Ladies Waist Pattern 9684, and Ladies Skirt Pattern 9685. Prune colored poplin, with shadow lace for vest, and velvet of a darker shade for trimming is here shown. The waist is cut in bloused style, and may be finished with long or shorter sleeves. The fronts are cut low over a deep vest that is outlined by a shaped revers, that forms a shaped collar over the back. The skirt shows deep tucks in front and back. The Waist Pattern is cut in 5 sizes: 32, 34 36, 38, 40 inches bust measure. The skirt in 5 sizes: 22, 24, 26, 28 and 30 inches waist measure. It requires 6 1-8 yards of 36 inch material for a 36 inch size.

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