



The Heir of Bayneham

—AND—
Lady Fulton's Ward.

CHAPTER XIX.

"It should be set in pure, pale gold," said Lady Grahame admiringly. "I have seen many jewels, but none like this."

"I hope to have it made into a ring," said Mr. Fulton. "If ever good-fortune should favor my wishes, and I should marry; for that jewel will show perfection on a fair, white hand."

Lady Grahame involuntarily glanced at her own as he spoke, then blushed as she found his eyes bent upon her.

There was so much to be said about the wonderful opal that it was luncheon time before the visit was half ended, and Mr. Fulton accepted Lady Grahame's invitation to join them. He was beginning to fall in love with his own scheme, and the more he saw of the lady, the more sure he felt that she above all others was best suited for him.

During the course of conversation, Mr. Fulton found that Lady Grahame seemed to know every one, and go everywhere, and that the circles he wished in vain to enter were open to her.

"You have been abroad for many years, I presume?" said Lady Grahame.

"Yes," said Mr. Fulton quietly. "Many years ago I went to seek my fortune; and I made it, and now wish to enjoy it."

"I should imagine the latter to be very easy," said Lady Grahame.

"Not so easy when one is quite alone," he replied sentimentally.

As he spoke there came across him a vision of the beautiful face of his dead wife. Would any one ever love him again as she had done?

He left Lady Grahame resolved to win her. If she were his wife he felt that anything was not impossible with her influential connections he might aspire to hold any office. Golden hopes and dreams hovered over him. Rank and position seemed to be within his grasp. His task lay straight before him; he had but to win Lady Grahame and his life would be one long success.

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CHAPTER XXI.

Considering his naturally indolent, ease-loving nature, Mr. Fulton certainly gave himself some trouble in attaining his object. He spared no pains. If Lady Grahame went to the opera, he was sure to be seen in her box. Whatever ball or party she attended, he was invariably present. People began to say, "If you ask Lady Grahame, you must not forget Mr. Fulton; he is her shadow."

Rare and magnificent bouquets found their way to her table, and Miss Lowe's office became a mere sinecure; but Mr. Fulton could not tell if he were making much progress. Lady Grahame was always pleased to see him, and smiled over his bouquets, and enjoyed his conversation; but she gave him no reason to hope that she would ever become his wife.

Innately prudent, now that there was a lover to whom no one could raise any objections, she began to ask herself seriously whether a husband would not sadly interfere with her love of comfort. She could not hope to be the first object of attention in the house if she married. A husband requires much waiting upon, much patience. Was it worth her while to give up her freedom, and take upon herself new chains? These thoughts made her pause before accepting Mr. Fulton, or even allowing him to appear as her lover; but it did not damp his ardor. It was something new and not displeasing to him to meet with opposition. Magdalen had given her pure, young loving heart when he asked for it; she knew nothing of coquetry, its thousand wiles and arts.

Lady Grahame could not have adopted any plan which would have enhanced her value more in his eyes.

He gratified her vanity by seeking her advice; he told her how much he wished to be of service to his country; that he wanted to do something which would make him more worthy of winning a glorious prize. He wanted to purchase an estate that would give him some standing and influence in the country.

It so happened that, just at that time, Squire Grenholme, of Grenholme Park, near Oulton, died, and the greater part of his property, consisting of land and houses in Oulton, was for sale. Mr. Fulton's solicitors told him of it. The Hall would not be sold until the death of the Squire's widow, now old and infirm, but the other property was to be had at a great bargain. In the course of a few years when that frail life ended, he could purchase the Hall, and would become, as Squire of Grenholme, a man of position and eminence.

The opportunity was too tempting to be lost. The purchase was concluded, and Mr. Fulton found himself a large landowner and possessor of numerous houses in the pretty town of Oulton; and when all was arranged he went triumphantly to Lady Grahame, to tell her what he had done.

"You have acted very wisely," she said; "money is very well, but nothing gives one such a good standing as the possession of property. Did you say Oulton? Lord Bayneham's estate is somewhere near there, is it not?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Fulton, who had carefully ascertained all the "bearing" of his new acquisition. "Bayneham Castle is about six miles from the town. It is the chief place in the neighborhood, I believe."

"I should imagine so," said Lady Grahame indifferently; "and if ever you should purchase the Hall, Mr. Fulton, and become Squire of Grenholme, you will find them charming neighbors. The Dowager Lady Bayneham is one of my dearest friends. Her son is abroad just now."

"You have so many friends, Lady Grahame!" sighed her admirer. "Is the young earl married?"

"Yes," replied her ladyship; "he married last year one of the loveliest girls in England; they are in Italy now, I believe. The young Lady Bayneham will be one of our brightest stars. I never met any one so exquisitely lovely, graceful and refined."

Paul Fulton, as he styled himself, rejoiced to hear all this. He saw his way clearly now; and once Squire of Grenholme, husband of the fashionable widow, and near neighbor of the young earl, he should attain the summit of his ambition.

There came to him no solemn warnings; he never thought of this



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As time wore on, the fears that had slightly disturbed him passed away. No one recognized him. He met one of his old boon companions, who looked in his face and knew him not. He felt safe; there was no one living who could connect the fashionable man of the world, Paul Fulton, with the convict, Stephen Hurst. He grew proud of his respectability, and wondered how he could ever have been so blind and foolish as to fall into the depths of disgrace. He was now scrupulously honest and upright in all his dealings; hospitable, gay, generous, and universally popular. He would rather have died any death than have undergone the shame of having his former career made known. He placed an almost absurd value on the esteem of his fellow men.

It was at his club that Bertie Carlyon made the acquaintance of Mr. Fulton. They became friends in some degree, although there was little in common between them. Bertie was gifted, and what is more rare, he was industrious. His works were eagerly read by the thoughtful men of the day. He was courted by wise men and beautiful women; for that Paul Fulton sought him. He was a rising man, whom to know was a great honor. So they dined together occasionally, met at their club, and discussed passing events, all unconscious of the tragic link that bound them.

From Bertie Carlyon, as from Lady Grahame, Paul Fulton heard warm praises of the young lord's wife. He thought much of his neighbors who were to be when he was Squire of Grenholme.

(To be continued.)

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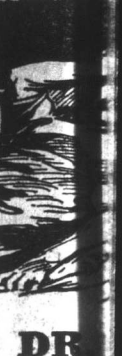
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