



The Making of a Duchess

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in me and my possessions. It did not require much perspicacity to discern the design in her seemingly ingenuous frankness. In speaking of the Duke to me, she said:

"His marriage was a sublime mistake—he married for love, and realized boredom. His wife was the saintly daughter of a penniless baronet. She possessed all of the virtues and none of the graces, as somebody or other once said. After presenting him with an heir and two other boys, she died, satisfied that she had done all that could be expected of her. After all Turrets might have done as well had he married money in the first place. Unless he does now, and not less than forty thousand pounds per annum at that, he'll lose his estates. I tell him that in his second marriage, a man should retrieve the mistakes of his first."

Then again:

"Turrets is nearly forty. If he marries a young girl, he'll become her slave. A woman never acquires the proper humility until time forces her to take inventory of her charms."

Later:

"A man of consequence need not be a stickler for birth. It is the middle classes and the undistinguished, who fear to lose ground with their neighbors, who have to consider position."

A DAY'S hike had been planned for a certain Thursday. We were to take our luncheon with us, and were on this special occasion to be permitted to have a companion to be chosen by Doctor Brent herself. How it came about that the Duchess and I were paired off together, I do not know. Certainly, coupled according to our pedestrian ability, we were ill-matched.

The Duchess was delighted.

"My dear," said she, "I'm going to elope with you. I've got it planned beautifully. I smuggled through a letter to-day to Turrets. My motor, or rather the Duke's—we have only one between us—will meet us a bit beyond the cross-roads. Turrets is only thirty miles from here. We'll be there in time for luncheon. I haven't had a full-sized meal or a glass of ale in five weeks."

"Do you expect me to go in this get-up?" I inquired.

"Certainly. We'd never manage to get away in any other. At any rate, there'll be nobody but ourselves. Turrets is away on a fishing trip, and the boys are at school."

On Thursday, we came upon the motor at the designated spot. Looking about to make sure that we were undetected, we slipped quickly into the disguising dust-coats, caps, goggles, and veils which had been made ready for us, and climbed into the car which sped swiftly down the road past the unsuspecting Doctor Brent, herself.

Turrets-Brenham, as it is called, covers some twenty square miles and, unlike most of the neatly ordered estates of England, is made up of scattered farms and a straggling village. When I remarked that it seemed a pity that so much fertile land should not be giving its due returns, the Duchess told me that in the time of the seventeenth Duke (the present Duke's grandfather) there had been a severe outbreak of typhus fever due to the antiquated drainage system, which had driven many tenants from the land. The Duchy had been forced to raze many of the cottages and farms, and since then, through lack of funds, had been unable to rebuild to attract tenants.

Turrets Castle, itself, is a tremendous succession of turreted battlements. The Duchess informed me that owing to their financial straits, which had necessitated the reduction of their retinue of servants, she and the Duke and his family were obliged to limit their occupancy to one wing only. The motor stopped before this wing, and a footman in somewhat worn livery, ushered us into a cosy drawing-room where a cheery log-fire leaped up in greeting to us. The best of the room had been drawn to the centre. The corners appeared to have been neglected even by the common duster, and the draperies at the doors and windows were faded and bore ravages of moths.

The luncheon, however, of which we partook in a sunny dining-room nearby, was irreproachably prepared and served. The Duchess was a gourmet—she had dispensed with her parlor-maid sooner than her chef. Russian caviar, American creamed chicken, Indian curried rice, Italian chicory, and French mousse, not

forgetting the English brewed ale, formed a delicious composite of cosmopolitan tit-bits.

When we had done, the Duchess blinked drowsily.

"Will you find some way of amusing yourself, child, while I get forty winks? The Long Picture Gallery's in the East Wing. Thomas" (the footman) "will open it up for you. It wouldn't do to leave Turrets without seeing our Lawrences and our Lelys. The place is musty and damp; I hate it. Take a peep just to say that you've been there, then run over and see the Duke's chicken castles. You'll be interested, I know, in his Plymouth Rocks, or whatever you call them. Now, be off, before I gape in your face."

The portraits in the Long Gallery were wonderful, but the place smelled of dust, and the stone flags were dank, so that I was glad after a brief survey, to run out into the warmth and freshness of the afternoon. Thomas followed me into the pitiless sunshine which shone markedly upon the worn spots in his ridiculous livery.

The poultry housing, unlike anything else about Turrets, was modern in its construction and cleanliness. I was in the laying-house, bending over a splendid specimen of a White Wyandotte, when a voice at my side said:

"That is my prize lady. What do you think of her?"

I looked up into the patient eyes of the Duke. He took my hand.

"You must forgive my not being at the Castle to receive you, but the Mater wrote that it was to be luncheon strictly 'a deux,' so I consoled myself by going off for a morning's fishing until such time as I dared appear."

He took his basket and handed it to Thomas, together with his rod.

"Now, Miss Mallo, I am at your service. Will you let me show you about Turrets?"

I WAS hot with resentment at the Duchess's treachery concealed as it had been in half truth. I felt as if the hideous garments of the Brent design branded me with an ignoble stigma. I determined that the Duchess should be dragged into my misery.

"Gladly, Duke," I answered, "if you will stop back at the Castle for your mother."

"The mater's not much of a walker, you know," he suggested.

"Oh, yes, she is, since Doctor Brent's had her in charge."

Upon our entering the Castle, Thomas informed us that the Duchess was resting in the morning-room.

"Please take me there," I demanded.

As we approached the room, I heard voices, but when after knocking, I opened the door, the maid looked at me abashed and pointed to her mistress, to all aspects sound asleep upon the wicker couch.

My inclination was to shake her... but there was the maid. It has often amused me to think how these purveyors of our gross comfort decide our actions.

Clearly, there was nothing left to do, but to let the Duke show me about. Poor, patient man, he did his best, but my mood was ugly—ugly as the garments which enveloped me.

After a time, his magnanimity won me over. I extended my hand to him.

"I've been horrid, but even a woman less vain than I would balk at displaying these garments outside of a mad-house."

"So that's been the trouble," he laughed, with a note of relief.

"That, and—" I hesitated.

"You mean the mater." His face lengthened into gravity. "Miss Mallo, her friends, and I hope you count yourself one of them, have learned not to take her too seriously."

The Duke, I decided was not attempting to disarm me, but was conveying as best he could the hint that he was not privy to his mother's scheme. My constraint fell from me, and he and I spent a delightful hour by the drawing-room fire.

Then, realizing that we must be starting if we were to get back to Brent's in time for supper, I went to awaken the Duchess.

This time all was quiet at my approach, and I found the lady in a genuine slumber from which I encountered some difficulty in arousing her.

"Oh," she sighed, "you have brought me back to the grim reality of a return to Brent's. I was dreaming that I had

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