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Love in the Abbey

Lady Ethel's Rival

CHAPTER XXIX.
AN UNANSWERABLE CHARGE.

"Deceived you?" she echoes faintly. "Have I deceived you?"

His face hardens, and he drops her hand as if it had stung him, and it falls against the rough seat with the weakness of a dead limb.

"Why do you ask me that?" he says. "Is his bent brows. 'You are not so young, not so innocent of right and wrong, not to know that you have betrayed me, Kitty!'"

For a moment she flushes hotly, and flashes a proud denial, then her head droops and she looks the impersonation of guilt, lovely and irresistible still, but guilty!

He stands, looking at her with stern reproachfulness.

"Kitty, I did not mean to say a word of this; I would have spared you the shame of accusation; but—but—can you tell me, truthfully, that I am the only man who has spoken of love to you—that you have made no promise to another? I put the question to you yesterday, and—God forgive you, my poor child! You—lied to me!"

"W-w," hoarsely, with a passion intensified by the effort to restrain it, "you cannot wipe the memory of James Ainsley from your mind."

There is no need for her to speak; her face, crimson and bowed with shame, is all too eloquent.

"Where were you on Tuesday night?" he asks, forgetting his resolution to deal gently with her, forgetting everything but the mad love and jealousy which burns within his brain, and levels him, for the moment with the commonest type of humanity.

"On Tuesday night?" says Kitty, in a hollow voice, lifting her face with a sudden defiance. "You know where I was. Why do you ask me? Is that why—why you are leaving me?"

"You were at the theater alone—alone!" with a cruel emphasis on the word, "alone with Mr. Ainsley!"

For a moment a wild thrill of hope rushes through her; she lifts her face, tremulous and eager, and the words of denial—the quick, sharp words, "Not alone with him—Reginald—"

forms upon her lips; but suddenly she remembers her promise—a promise that she must keep, foolish, idiotic as it seems, but still a promise—and her head droops again.

That flash of hope is reflected for a moment on his own wildly beating heart, but as it flies away he becomes more bitter for the very disappointment.

"I do not find anything for reproach in that," he says. "You are engaged, you will be man and wife, and—with a pause more eloquent than words—"there was no harm, God knows; but why, heaven and earth! why did you keep it from me? I ask you why did you deceive me? God! that one so young, so childlike, should be so treacherous! Are all women born coquettes?"

"Coquette!" she says, wincing, and passionately. "Coquette—treacherous—"

"Have you not betrayed him?" he asks, through his shut teeth. "I am not the only one who suffers, child. Do you think I have forgotten his part and lot in this miserable business? Poor fellow! In all my misery, I can find heart enough left to pity him."

Roused at last, Kitty springs to her feet and confronts him.

"You—you need not pity him!" she pants, fierce and defiant. "He never spoke so cruelly to me, though"—faltering, and flushing with hot shame—"though, perhaps—perhaps he has had more cause. You need not pity him. It is true that—that he has loved me for years and years—it is true that I went to the theater with him—"

"And rode home with him!" he mutters, his eyes gleaming jealously on her flushed and defiant loveliness.

"Yes," she says, looking him straight in the face. "Rode home with him. It is true that I promised him—"

With a gesture of passionate entreaty, he puts out his hand to stop her.

"Spare me, then," he says; "at least spare me the—the recital of your love passages, my child! It is too late now; you should have told me yesterday—yesterday."

Stung with shame at the hard cruelty of the sarcasm, she shrinks almost as if he had struck her.

"Yes," she says, in an altered voice, "Yes," she says, in an altered voice, "Oh, my darling! If you know how deeply you have stabbed me! Oh, Kitty, Kitty! If you know how I loved you yesterday—how I love you still! It's the last time!" and he presses his lips to hers with a clinging, passionate, bitter kiss, puts her from him, and without another word, turns away and is gone.

Kitty, sinking into the seat—almost thrown there by his gesture of farewell—rises, panting and frightened by his passion, to detain him by a touch or word, but even as she stretches out her hands, a peal of thunder sounds clattering over her head, and a flash of lightning throws a vivid glare over the scene, and shows her the stalwart figure, hurrying, with bent head, out of hearing and sight.

Then, as she sinks back and covers her face with her hands, the rain, that seems to have been politely waiting until my Lord Sterne's adieu—are quite concluded, pours down in a deluge.

CHAPTER XXX.
AN HONEST MAN'S LOVE.

WITH an energy that seemed to be almost human, the rain pours down; the great drops come at first slowly and heavily through the chestnut leaves and fall with a dab on Kitty's head, as it rests forlornly upon the seat, and then soaking through the tree and penetrating the cotton dress, that is not half so waterproof as the leaves. Two little birds taking shelter in the branches above her head, look down, and in forcible language recommend her to take shelter also, and a squirrel scuffling along the open without an umbrella, turns his head to stare at the prostrate, miserable little figure, with surprise and contemptuous superiority.

But, though the rain actually stings her shoulders and runs in spiteful little rivulets down about her neck, Kitty remains as indifferent as the ducks upon the pond, and looks like a naïd taking a constitutional shower bath. Motionless and supine she lies, with her face hidden on her arm, her cheeks burning with mingled misery and shame and wounded pain, wishing, doubtless, that a deluge would come and wipe her and her unhappy existence out of the record. Every now and then there comes a flash of lightning and a dull crash of thunder, but the gods are powerless to move her, and all their wrath passes over her as unnoticed as the water that literally runs off her back. (To be continued.)

Girls! Have a Mass of Beautiful Hair, Soft, Glossy, Wavy

A small bottle destroys dandruff and doubles beauty of your hair.

Within ten minutes after an application of Danderine you can not find a single trace of dandruff or falling hair and your scalp will not itch, but what will please you most will be after a few weeks' use, when you see new hair, fine and downy at first—yes—but really new hair—growing all over the scalp.

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"Afrald!" he says reproachfully, with a spasmodic pain.

"Yes, afraid," she repeats, with the same dim frankness. "You—you were so earnest, and so—so grave that I couldn't—oh!" covering her face with her hands and breaking down—"I couldn't, though I tried so hard—so hard—to tell you, I couldn't do it!"

Her distress nerves him almost beyond endurance.

"What is there in me to inspire such fear?" he says, with a subdued bitterness. "You were afraid of me—afraid! and yet you said you loved me! Ah, Kitty!"

She looks at him with a wan smile. "There was no love there," he says; "love casteth out fear! How came you to deceive yourself, my poor child?"

If he could but read her smile aright—the piteous smile on the pale, quivering lips, that are so unlike Kitty's red, ripe pouting ones. But his jealousy, his mistaken unbelief and suspicion blind him, and neither with his actual nor his mental vision can he see the plain truth, that she loves him with all her sweet, little heart, and is his, heart and soul his, if he will but take her to him.

Wrestling with his own good, thrusting his happiness away from him, with the mistaken sense of honor and right, he stands aloof from her; not reproachful now, but full of a mistaken pity that is more than reproach.

To that last question Kitty does not reply, and with a weary sigh, he waves it away from him.

"Forgive me, my poor child," he says. "Indeed, I see now how much better it would have been if I had offaced myself, left the scene without those last words; they have been bitter ones for both of us. How clearly I see it all now, and I blame you no longer. It is I who should ask for forgiveness, and see, Kitty," holding out his hand toward her, "I do ask for it."

"What have I to forgive?" she says in a constrained voice.

"Yesterday," he says. She looks at him.

"Forgive you for tempting me from my promise to James? Forgive you for coming with your wealth"—he winces—"with your greatness, with yourself, and tempting me to—to—believe that you loved me?"

He inclines his head—rather it drops on his breast.

Kitty draws a long breath and looks at him with the same smile.

"Yes," she says, in a low, clear voice, "I forgive you, Lord Sterne."

He looks up with a bitter reproach. "Ah!" he says, "if you could but have forgotten that I was Lord anything!"

"You think that—that I said what I said yesterday because you are Lord Sterne?" she says.

"What else am I to think," he answers wearily. "Then, with a burst of passion, 'God! to think that such things as that could weigh with you—I thought yesterday when you asked me those questions about the castle—that—that you were joking, that it was a mere childish curiosity! Even now I cannot—I will not believe that you are utterly heartless and mercenary! Can I look on your face and believe it?'"

"Thank you for so much!" says Kitty, her lips curled with scorn. "It is much for you to admit that I am not utterly heartless and mercenary. I am grateful for even so good an opinion of me."

"No more, no more!" he pleads, as if broken down. "Let us bury the past—such a short past—and forget it. It is the kindest wish I can cherish for you; it is the kindest wish I can cherish for me. Let us go, each our own way, and forget each other. After all, our short day cannot cling to you long, and for me"—he breaks off with a moody silence—"I am used to disappointment, Kitty, and I must bear this; good-by."

He puts out his hand with a mournful smile that makes his face doubly haggard and wan.

"Good-by, my little love of a day! Good-by, and God bless you."

White, but tearless, she puts her hand in his, and at her touch the strong man trembles like a child.

"Oh, my darling!" he cries hoarsely, and drawing her toward him, he presses her to his heart so tightly and passionately that he hurts her.

"Oh, my darling, if you know how deeply you have stabbed me! Oh, Kitty, Kitty! If you know how I loved you yesterday—how I love you still! It's the last time!" and he presses his lips to hers with a clinging, passionate, bitter kiss, puts her from him, and without another word, turns away and is gone.

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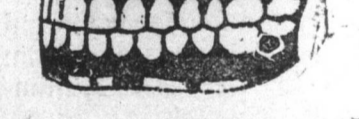
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LONDON, Nov. 25, 1918.

NEXT PARLIAMENT—LADY CANDIDATES.

A shrewd electioneer, whose judgment of a difficult situation is as good as any, ventures to forecast the new Parliament thus: Unionists 320 to 330; Lloyd George Liberals (including a few patriotic Labor men), 120; Labor Party, 60; Asquith Liberals, 60; Irish of various views (including Sinn Feiners), 100. From another source I hear it said that six women candidates are sure of election, including Miss Violet Markham, Mrs. Philip Snowden, and Miss Mary MacArthur. Miss Pankhurst is not reckoned in the six, and the more general view is that Miss Markham is the only candidate who really has prospects of sitting at St. Stephen's next year. In connection with this lady it is very curious to remember that she was one of the most bitter antagonists of the votes for women movement. According to her—and she gave her views on a great number of platforms and in many articles in newspapers—women's place was home. Now she herself looks like being our first lady Member of Parliament and she explains the change round by an alteration in her views because of the war.

THE LANTERN IN BIG BEN.

I have not seen any reference to the interesting fact that when the armistice was signed and the news came out on November 11th not only was Big Ben (the clock in the tower of the Houses of Parliament) illuminated, but the lantern at the very peak of the tower, which in time of peace burns as long as the House is sitting, and is turned out as soon as the House rises, was relighted also. That lantern is a public signal, which is not only interesting, but also to many people useful. Officials of the House coming on late duty have looked up to see whether it was burning or not, and if it was out had turned back home, knowing that the House was up and that they were not wanted. I have myself had first word of a Government defeat from seeing that the light was out. At that time (it was before the war) nothing but a Government defeat could have explained the rising of the House so early. The lantern was put out when the air raids began—perhaps unnecessarily. At any rate, from the first hour of peace it was lit again, and now once more one can look up at the Clock Tower and know that if that light is burning the House of Commons is sitting.

THE CENSORSHIP.

The universal demand for the abolition of the censorship at the earliest possible moment has made some slight impression upon the Government, and obtained a few concessions to public opinion. But Lord Burnham and his supporters in the demand for a relaxation of war measures and precautions will clearly have to use all the remaining Parliamentary opportunities before the dissolution in demanding from the reluctant temporary authorities even piecemeal surrenders of this, that, and the other. It is not only interesting, but also to many people useful. Officials of the House coming on late duty have looked up to see whether it was burning or not, and if it was out had turned back home, knowing that the House was up and that they were not wanted. I have myself had first word of a Government defeat from seeing that the light was out. At that time (it was before the war) nothing but a Government defeat could have explained the rising of the House so early. The lantern was put out when the air raids began—perhaps unnecessarily. At any rate, from the first hour of peace it was lit again, and now once more one can look up at the Clock Tower and know that if that light is burning the House of Commons is sitting.

GER