



An Indispensable Favorite
OR
Wealth and Beauty at Stake!

CHAPTER X.
They cannot be very haughty and strict with their amiable, timid, fussy, but kind-hearted old mistress, or the gentle and polite young mistress, both of whom venture to ring the bells only under the pressure of extreme circumstances. But, when Viscount Glynn had dined at the house once, and made a morning call once, and when Lady Nora comes in to afternoon tea one day just before Christmas, the "livered retainers" become respectful to a remarkable degree.

"I shouldn't wonder if we ain't goin' to 'ave a marriage in 'igh life here before long, Mr. Lord," the footman remarks to the butler who retires in that stately name.

For a delicious bit of gossip had swept down the back stairs concerning Miss Yolande—"such a quiet, plain sort of a young lady, too!" as the maids say, rather enviously—that there is "somebody" very dashing in the background as Miss Yolande's lover—"an officer"—an "honorable"—"Lord Glynn's brother"—and so on through a host of surmises, which all receive abundant confirmation on the afternoon when Lady Nora comes, and the servants hear how her ladyship kissed Miss Yolande on both cheeks, and said, "Good-by, dear! How sweet it would be if you were coming to spend Christmas at Pentreath with us!" and how Miss Yolande "blushed up as red as a rosebud," as the footman says, sentimentally, at her ladyship's words.

They do not, however, suspect that the pretty "gush" of Lady Nora's parting speech has been rather in the nature of a salve which she feels it polite to offer. For this second visit of Lady Nora has not been a much pleasanter one than her first, when she called one afternoon at Fair View with her maid and stayed to dinner.

Now, as then, she has been perfectly civil and gracious; but it has been the condescension of the patrician to the plebeian. She has said kind and complimentary things; but in every smile and tone there is the idea conveyed that the society in which she finds herself is far removed from the sphere of her "friends."

This afternoon her manner has been more coldly, frigidly gracious, with a decided flavor of condescension in her prettiest speeches. She has put up her eyeglass to note the dimensions of the large drawing-room, and asked them if they really do prefer a room like this for afternoon tea.

"I always prefer the tiniest room of the suite, where one can have one's pet china and books and little tables and brackets close at hand," she says, with another smiling stare of condescension at the grand drawing-room, thirty-six by thirty, as the carpet planner measured it. "But the house looks nice and comfortable," Lady Nora is good enough to add. "I should think you find yourselves far more comfortable here than in that lonely little place down in the country."

She has spoken of her son once or twice, but only in the most formal and distant manner, as "Captain Glynn," and of his continued stay at Pentreath.

"The earl, his uncle, wishes to have him with him," she says, in her soft, maternal tone, "and Captain Glynn wishes to stay. Pentreath has a great many attractions for him, I believe," she adds, with a serene smile, playing carelessly with her teaspoon, noting at the same time that Yolande's pale face, with its great dark eyes, purple-black in the lamplight, has changed as though a shadow had fallen over it at her words.

Lady Nora notes, too, at the same time, that the teaspoon with which she plays is solid silver of the last fashionable pattern, modern antique, and all the appointments of the tea table, the drawing-room, and the house itself are "very creditable."

Two days later Lady Nora is at Pentreath, and again drinking her afternoon tea in her own dressing-room this time—and telling herself as she does so, that it is not such good tea as the Dormers', nor is it served in such dainty cups as theirs.

She talks long and earnestly with her son, and she tells him everything. Lady Nora is never troubled by delicacy when it goes against her interests; so now she gives for Captain Glynn's benefit a description of the house and furniture, plate and servants, of the Dormers, their money investments and prospects so far as she can learn them, old Miss Dormer's amiability and humble-mindedness, and meek-spirited Yolande's blushes and pallor at the mention of his name.

"And now, Dallas, my dear boy, you must lose no more time here!" his mother says, in an imperiously-entreaty manner—she dares use no other with him. "Lyneph Glynn is getting a hold over these people, and, worse still, a hold over their money, and it is the only chance I see for you. Neither Lyneph nor the earl will do anything for you. I have felt that always, but I did hope for some-

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thing from that election; however, as he lost it—and nobody who knows Viscount Glynn can be surprised at that," Lady Nora says, bitterly, "there is an end of everything in that direction."

Her ladyship pauses for a moment; then, as her son makes no response, she goes on: "And now he has plunged into money-making schemes in the city, and has completely wormed himself into old Dormer's confidence—and we know what that means with a covetous, grasping, money-loving miser like Glynn!" Lady Nora declares, with a significant glance at her son. "And he has a spy in the camp—a sort of private intelligence office—in that English Frenchwoman, Miss Bella Glover. I feel quite certain; and—Dallas, dearest, you had better make your mind at once!" her ladyship urges imploringly, with tears in her bright eyes—she can shed maternal tears upon occasion. "It is really a very fair prospect for you, and you know Joyce and you can be nothing to each other now."

"Why?" Dallas demands, with a smothering fire of defiance and resolve breaking out in a flame in his eyes and voice. "Why should I not marry the girl I love and the girl who loves me, and go and earn a living for her like an honest man, no matter what I have to do?"

He paces up and down the room with that flame of excitement and desperate hope thrilling him through, lighting up his handsome, weary face into noble beauty, making him appear stronger, taller, comelier, even to his mother's admiring eyes.

"I'll go to Texas!" he declares. "A fellow I know is going; and in three years or so I can make money enough on a cattle ranch to be able to give her a home—a humble one, I dare say—in some Western town in the States. That's what Daylesford—one of our fellows—is going to do. And I believe Joyce will be faithful to me."

He speaks with passionate determination, for there is a look of half alarm, half compassion in Lady Nora's eyes as she gazes at him.

"For three or four years!" she questions, coldly, though she is cowering in her chair before the bright, hopeful, handsome face. "No, Dallas, not for three or four months. Joyce Murray is engaged to Lord Dunavon. He proposed to her only last night, and she accepted him; so her mother told me this very morning."

Dallas says never a word for a few minutes. His hand pauses in caressing Lady Nora's little pig, which is perched on the end of the scroll of the stately-covered sofa, but that is all.

"I must have that story from Joyce herself," he says at last, in a low, hard voice. "I know both you and Mrs. Murray are apt to believe a thing true when you wish it to be so. No offense to either of you!"

He leaves the room without a word more, though he hears Lady Nora saying something to him in "anxious, pleading tones. Had she gone down upon her knees and implored him to stay, he would have passed her without a word at this moment. He walks downstairs and into the library, where he waits, standing by the great black marble mantelpiece, until one of the servants brings Miss Murray's maid, who takes a pencilled note from him to her mistress.

He waits on, never stirring hand or foot, nor even uttering a sigh, until the door opens, and fair, false Joyce enters the room, with a smile on her lips and her heart beating very fast.

(To be continued.)

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