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## Better a Peasant Than a Peer.

### CHAPTER IX. THE FULLNESS OF JOY.

And he moves aside; but, with a low cry, she holds out one trembling hand, and the next moment is lying nestling, trembling and hiding, upon his breast.

With half-murmured words, with his hand caressing her hair, he soothes her.

"Have I frightened you, my darling—my own?" he whispers.

"Yes—no," she says at last, raising her face for a moment, but resting it again upon his breast. "Was I frightened? Yes; it was so strange—so strange to hear you say that. I felt as if I cannot tell what it was. Yes, it frightened me, for then I saw myself, and knew that it was true."

"That what was true, my Jeanne?"

"That I loved you," she answers, looking up at him, her eyes shining solemnly through her tears.

"You love me, my darling?" he says, trembling in his turn in the presence of the pure and spotless soul.

"Yes, do I not?" she says. "Tell me whether I do. But—write—just say that again."

"I love you, Jeanne!" he says. She lets her head fall with a long-drawn sigh.

"And I love you, do I not? Tell me how you know that—that you love me."

"I know it, darling, because my heart speaks out plainly; I know it, because, although I only saw you for a minute that winter's night, I carried your face, your eyes, the very curve of these dear lips home with me, and hugged them to my heart in my solitude, though I strove hard to put them from me. I know it, because I used to watch for your passing, and knew when you were near without having seen you with my actual eyes; because, Jeanne, though I fought against the feeling, I never heard your voice but it rang down deep in my heart; because when you were not near me I was wretched, and when you were near me, I was wretched that I could not hold you in my arms as I do now. And you, Jeanne; can you say that? Ah, no!"

"No," she says, softly, "because I did not know what love was. I know what I felt, and yet I cannot tell, not

even now. But I was restless and unhappy when you were not near, and happy when you were; then something seemed to sing within me; and once—once when you held my hand and called me by name, in the boat—her voice breaks, and her eyes fill with tears—"I felt that I must come to you—that that I could not move away! Was that love?"

And what does he say? What can he say? Not one word, for the fullness of the joy which strikes and keeps him silent. But, bending his head, he takes her face in his hands; lovelier now than it was five minutes past, and kisses her twice, thrice on the lips. And Jeanne, unshrinkingly places her soul in his hands, and gives him, with purest, sweetest trust, kiss for kiss.

And thus they narrowly escape being found by Master Hal, who comes trotting down the lane, shouting: "Jeanne—Jeanne! Mr. Vane! Are you lost, like the babes in the wood?"

CHAPTER X.  
REPULSED.

Jeanne starts from her lover's side like a frightened fawn at Hal's voice, with her hand upon the arm which had been around her waist a minute ago; but the pressure of that hand! how different it was to the light, feather-touch which it had been when they started, and how close it was pressed to his heart.

Surely Jeanne has never lived till now—has awakened at last—has awakened into a glorious world of love and joy!

Hal tramps by their side whistling, quite unconscious of the momentous change which has taken place in the lives of his companions, and so they reach the Gate House.

"All safe!" says Hal, looking up at the old red building. "Never come home but I expect to see it reduced to ruins by some one of uncle's experiments. You'll come in and try a little of uncle's black bottle of old whiskey, Mr. Vane?"

"Shall I?" whispers Vernon. "Shall I come in and tell them?"

Jeanne hesitates a moment; then she looks up, her eyes beaming with love, and with a soft little flush on her face.

"No," she says, softly, "not to-night; I want to have it all to myself—to my very self for one night!"

"Run on and get the door open, Hal," says Vernon; then, as the boy disappears, he takes her in his arms.

"Good-night, my darling, my own, good-night. Will you—can you give

me one kiss?" and as he bends, Jeanne, innocent Jeanne, puts her arms around his neck and draws his face down to hers and kisses him; then she breaks from him and flies across the courtyard.

He sees her turn on the threshold and waves one white hand, and then the door closes, and the night seems to have suddenly grown dark. He turns and strides away, but not home; no four walls will contain his happiness as yet, and he goes down to the cliffs and stands gazing out to sea, with Jeanne's sweet, innocent face dancing on the waves, Jeanne's voice in the breeze, and such unspeakable joy in his soul as he had thought the world could never give him.

"Oh, my darling," he murmurs, "and have I found you at last when I had given up in despair; have I found the one thing all my life has been set upon, a true, pure, trusting love—for love's sake and mine alone? Oh, Jeanne, my child—woman, my own!"

And as he spoke, Vernon Vane, the grim, cynical reclus, seemed to change; the hard, stern features softened and grew young, the cold eyes gleamed brightly, the rare smile lit up the handsome face, and remained there. If love had awakened Jeanne and called her into life, it had given new life to Vernon Vane.

And Jeanne—well, Jeanne was afraid—actually afraid to face the homely scrutiny of Aunt Jane; she felt that her story was written on her half-parted lips.

"I am so tired, Hal, tell them," she said, and slipped by him up to her own room.

Then the new Jeanne went to the glass and looked at herself—looked till she grew crimson, and covered her face with her hands.

"He loves me—he loves me!" she cried, sinking on her knees, and laying her head upon her hand.

"Oh, let me think of it—how he said it. I love you, Jeanne, I love you." But for why should he? I am such a simple, poor, miserable girl; and he! oh, it cannot be true—it cannot be true; and yet, I love you, Jeanne, I love you!" He said it, and it must be true!

Jeanne fell asleep repeating these magic words which she had heard for the first time, and they were in her ears when she awoke. The happy sleep long, let poets say what they may to the contrary, and the sun was streaming through the diamond pane, and window ere she stole downstairs with a talltale blush on her face, and the light in her eyes which Vernon Vane's kisses had called there. To Jeanne, there seemed a new light over the earth, that filled it with a new beauty; she was half persuaded that the birds, flitting from elm to elm, were rejoicing in her joy.

"Well, child," said Aunt Jane, looking up from the coffee cups. "I thought you were never coming down. Were you so very tired last night? What did you do to—dance?"

"No," said Jeanne, hiding her flushed cheeks behind her cup; "there was no dancing, aunt, I think."

"You think!" echoed Aunt Jane. "Bless the girl! don't you know? Well, you don't look any the worse for your gay doings. And Mr. Vane was there, after all? He is getting quite sociable. Which of the girls did he fall in love with—ah! Maud or Georgina?"

"I—I don't think with either, aunt," stammered poor Jeanne.

"Hum! too soon, I suppose. I've kept your breakfast warm for you, and now I must go. Bless the girl, what a color she's got," she added, and as she passed, she bent down and kissed the sweet, upturned face.

Jeanne would her arms around the old lady's neck.

"Aunt," she murmured, hesitatingly.

"Well?" said Aunt Jane.

"No—thing," replied Jeanne, exasperatingly.

"What is it you want? something, I'll be bound. What is it, child?"

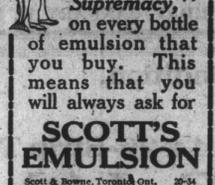
"Nothing in all the world!" exclaimed Jeanne, fervently.

Aunt Jane stared, murmured "Bless the child!" again, and bolted off to her dearly-beloved kitchen, and Jeanne was left with her secret untold! She finished her breakfast, and being a healthy girl, although in love, made a hearty one, and then went dutifully to the piano; but scales were not to be thought of this morning, for every one of them went to the tune of "I love you, Jeanne!" and before five minutes had elapsed, she had caught up her hat and was out in the garden. There was room there to think and realize; besides, she could see from the arbor the corner of the road which Vernon Vane would pass.

What would Aunt Jane say to him when he came? Suppose they said "No!" At this terrible idea Jeanne turned pale—for a moment; what should she do if they said "No?" Suddenly there came the clatter of the horses' hoofs upon the road, and Jeanne was wondering who it could be, when they suddenly ceased, and a man's footsteps were heard coming

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around the garden path. Now he was here, so near, Jeanne grew tired and shy, and drew back within the arbor to gain time; the footsteps grew slower, then ceased, and Jeanne, with a sudden dread, lest he should go again, arose and sprang to the opening and almost into the arms of Clarence Fitzjames.

The surprise and disappointment were so keen that she stood speechless for a moment, then she held out her hand and stammered a good-morning.

As she did so, something in his appearance struck her with a sense of strangeness. He was dressed as usual, with the scrupulous care for which his valet was famous, but it was not his faultless attire, but himself, that was different to the usual languidly nonchalant honorable. As he took off his hat, hurriedly, Jeanne saw that he was, marvelous to behold, flushed and excited, and the hand which grasped hers and pressed it closely was hot and feverish. Still stranger, his voice, usually so low, and melodiously indolent, was quick and earnest.

"Good-morning, Miss Bertram!" he said. "I have surprised you; you thought it was your brother, perhaps? I hope—I am not unwelcome?"

Jeanne smiled, and also stared, as he answered: "I am glad to see you. Did you ride over?"

"Yes," he said. "Yes—may I come in?"

Jeanne stood aside, and sat down, looking at him. Yes, certainly he was changed.

He sat down for a moment, then got up and stood at the door, wiping his forehead, and looking around the garden with what seemed an effort to regain composure.

"What a pretty place!" he said, at last. "I have never been in this part of the grounds before. Is this your arbor—do you often sit here?"

"Yes, very often," said Jeanne. "It is pretty, isn't it? Did you see Aunt Jane, Mr. Fitzjames, or uncle?"

"No," he said. "I—the fact is—I looked in the drawing-room and came straight through into the garden. I thought I should find you here."

Jeanne laughed softly.

"I had kept quite still you would not, perhaps?"

"I should have been very sorry," he said, "for I came to see you—that is, of course, I should have kissed you."

Jeanne smiled and stole a glance at him. His handsome face—for it was handsome enough now in his earnestness—was still flushed, and his white hand, as it pulled at his mustache, trembled.

"It is very hot," he said, suddenly. "You rode fast," said Jeanne. "I heard your horse galloping."

"Yes, I came over at once," he said; "I wouldn't wait for breakfast."

"Oh," said Jeanne, rising, "why didn't you tell me at once. Will you come and get some?"

"No, thank you, no," he said quietly. "Don't trouble, don't go; indeed, I couldn't eat any yet. Don't go; it is so cool and—comfortable in here."

Jeanne sank back again, and he came and sat opposite her, fidgeting with his white driving gloves, and looking at her with the usual cool and self-assured Fitzjames as it was possible for one man to look unlike himself.

"Yes, I rode over," he said, breaking a pause, during which Jeanne had sat listening for those other footsteps; "I rode over because I couldn't walk."

Instinctively Jeanne glanced at his legs.

"I mean," he said, "I couldn't waste the time, and I wanted to see you at once."

(To be continued.)

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## Mr. Harding's Constitutional Innovation.

The announcement by President-Elect Harding that after he takes the reins of office next March, the Vice-President—who happens to be Hon. Calvin Coolidge of Massachusetts—shall sit in his Cabinet, but by virtue of his office, presages a very important and necessary change in American constitutional practice. It is probable that Governor Cox, had he been elected President, would have come to a similar decision with regard to his associate, Franklin Roosevelt. It so happened that on both the Republican and Democratic tickets, the candidate for Vice-President was an abler man than his chief; but this is merely a coincidence; the change would have come in any event.

Undoubtedly the circumstance that has chiefly influenced Mr. Harding and his advisers was the deadlock that occurred after the severe illness of President Wilson left the United States Cabinet to all intents and purpose headless for months. Hon. Mr. Lansing, Secretary of State, solved the problem by calling Cabinet meetings in his capacity as senior member of that body; but when the President became convalescent, he took the stand that during his illness the Cabinet should have ceased to function as a cognate body, and dismissed Mr. Lansing for having violated political etiquette and constitutional usage.

The decision of Mr. Harding, if accepted as a precedent, will prevent such a sorry and disruptive controversy in the future. The Vice-President will ipso facto become chairman of the Cabinet-Council in case of the prolonged illness of the President, just as he would were the Chief Executive to die.

There are many other reasons why the office of Vice-President should be relieved of its present anomalous and hollow character. Though that functionary presides as Speaker over the Senate, which has enormous powers of revision over the decisions of the Executive branch, especially on international matters; in no sense does he constitute a link between the Senate and the Executive. There has been no link of any kind; this despite the fact that under the American parliamentary system a Speaker is allowed much more personal initiative than under the British system. In the House of Representatives he is to all intents and purposes the house leader who directs the order of business. It is needless to expatiate on the advantages in facilitating discussion of the Peace Treaty, that have accrued had Vice-President Marshall, as Speaker of the Senate, been qualified as Cabinet member to announce the position of the Executive and his advisers on many vexed points.

The new plan will also make for continuity of policy in case of the death of a President. Owing to the existing conception of the Vice-Presidency as a cipher, the men who have in the past been unexpectedly elevated from that office to the Presidency, have been obliged to preside over Cabinets made up of men who regarded themselves as of much greater weight and importance. This was particularly true of Andrew Johnson, who succeeded Lincoln, and in a lesser degree of Chester A. Arthur, who succeeded Garfield. Only the fact that Roosevelt was an abler man than the martyred McKinley, and of very aggressive personality, enabled him to overcome this handicap. Indeed, the history of Roosevelt illustrates the established conception of the Vice-President as an insignificant functionary. Interests opposed to his policies as Governor of New York State hoped to check his career by jockeying him into the office of Vice-President, then regarded as a political tomb. The chance crime of an assassin confounded their intentions. In resolving that the office shall no longer be esteemed a political tomb, President-Elect Harding has taken a wise forward step.—Saturday Night.

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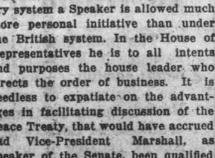
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