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## DIAMONDS FOR THE BRIDE

Or, a Proposal by Proxy

### CHAPTER XXIV.—(Cont'd)

The doctor was of opinion Annabel should take the boy into her husband's room; it was just possible Colonel Swayne might thus be made aware, though he could give no sign. His poor father was ill, they told the child; and he was quiet and awestruck when led in, and lifted on Annabel's knee beside the bed. Through this later afternoon Colonel Swayne had opened his eyes when approached, though he did not move or speak; he opened them now upon the child who was in his mother's arms, but there was no apparent recognition of him, or of the circumstances which accompanied his absence and return.

"Say, 'Good-night—dear papa,'" Annabel prompted in a whisper, and the words were repeated in Ernest's high, clear voice with out result. The father's eyes fixed on him, but only for a moment; then those heavy lids closed again, and to all appearance he subsided into sleep.

"You can do no more," Dr. Gregson said; and Annabel drew the child away to his white cot in the nursery, taking herself for this night the bed beside him; worn out as she was, she could do and watch no more. Even May's story, that separate and fuller telling which was for her own ear, must wait until the morrow. The immediate danger had passed over, that was enough to know; and upon the temporary remission it was possible for her weariness to sleep.

### CHAPTER XXV.

Hungerford came across from the Vicarage, having heard a rumor of Ernest's return; and indeed the village was soon alight with it from end to end, and there would have been a ringing of bells in the church tower but for the circumstance that Colonel Swayne was lying ill. And after the doctor's departure, finding himself alone with Lord Swinton, it occurred to him that now was a favorable time to deliver Gower's message. This uncle, the head of the family, stood in loco parentis to the daughters during Colonel Swayne's incapacity, and it was right he should be made aware that Gower was taking immediate action to provide for Margaret as his wife.

The child's arrival interrupted Lord Swinton's dinner; and now the excitement of it was over, he went back into the dining-room for dessert and coffee, bidding Hungerford sit down with him, as May was served elsewhere. There could not have been a better opportunity. Hungerford told how Gower came to him on leaving the Court, and how he was entrusted with the message, though Colonel Swayne's seizure of illness had prevented its delivery.

Lord Swinton heard him patiently to the end. "Very right," was his comment. "He could do no less, and I feel sure my brother will be satisfied—you may tell him so from me. As Gower does not mean to dispute the marriage, there can be no doubt at all that it took place."

"No, he does not doubt. And, of course, Mrs. Gower ought to have her rightful position and provision as his wife. He suggests she should live at Grendon, and he pledges himself not to disturb her there. But she can make her residence where she pleases, if she does not care for this arrangement."

"She will do well to go to Grendon. I will see her before I leave, and find out her wishes. And—once the nine days' wonder is over—the sooner the young people agree to let bygones be bygones and make a real match of it, the better for them both."

"I hope it will be so in the future. If he can overcome his love for—"

Hungerford stopped abruptly with the name unsaid. He remembered how he had struggled to master his own passion, and how it had been too strong for him. Would Gower's case be the same? Lord Swinton supplied the blank.

"For Dulcie. I should not suppose that would be difficult. There is no comparison between the girls, to my thinking. Margaret is a handsome woman, straight and wholesome and as good as gold. I always liked her, though she managed to fall out with her father. As for the other—"

If disparagement of his idol was not her fault, Hungerford would not hear it. He made haste to interrupt.

"She has suffered a great misfortune. I have hardly heard of her since it happened. Lord Swinton, can you tell me how she is bearing it?"

"She is up in her room still, that is all I know; has not shown except once, when she was called to her father. Poor little thing, it is excusable that she should have a fit of the sulks. The best remedy in her case would be another love-affair, and I would apply it as quickly as possible."

"It would seem unfitting so to intrude on her grief. But if indeed it were possible, the suitor would not be far to seek."

Hungerford spoke with emotion, and Lord Swinton looked up at him with a twinkle in his eye.

"You tempt me to guess that the suitor might be yourself."

"You are right. It was a thing inevitable that I should love her, and I am not ashamed to avow it. I came here, and she was only a schoolgirl. I do not know what Colonel Swayne would have said to my suit; I did not speak, for she seemed too young, too innocent. She liked me, or I thought she did, but it was just a child's liking. She met Gower, and then it was too late. But now, if it might be possible—"

"I don't see why it should be anything else. You have my good wishes. My advice to you is, be prompt with the young lady. Many a heart is caught at the rebound, and I don't think my brother Otho would refuse your father's son."

"The position I can offer is a very unceremonious one from that which she was lately about to accept. A country clergyman's wife. And my private income is small."

"Dulcie has a few thousands from her mother's settlement, as I daresay you know. My brother will not be able to do much for her. Still, between you you will have enough."

"Dulcie would not be ambitious—"

"No, I suppose not," said the uncle; but he spoke doubtfully, for his private opinion of this young niece of his belied his words.

"She is far too innocent, too simple. The real question is, can she care for me?"

"And that is a problem nobody can solve but yourself. A man can make almost any woman care for him if he sets about it the right way; and in your place I should set about it immediately. You need not wait for Otho's recovery and consent; you may tell him you had my leave."

Lord Swinton looked at this not improbable nephew. A fine man, certainly, though he had the face of an ascetic; a man whose inches and carriage were (he thought) fitter for the sword-belt than the cassock. What could a girl want more!—and parsons were supposed to make good husbands. He was do-

ing Otho a good turn in helping the girl off his hands. If Dulcie were consoled and provided for, Otho, on coming to himself, would find a difficulty the less. And if he could also settle this affair of Margaret, his journey down into the shires would not be wasted time.

The last-named affair lingered in his mind after Hungerford left him, and, following some further cogitation, he rang for the servant. It was growing late, but he had no time to lose. If Otho remained in the same state, he meant to go back to London the next day.

"Mrs. Swayne has gone to bed, I think," he began by way of opening, when the man appeared with the soda-water.

"Yes, my lord. The mistress was quite tired out. Nurse is sitting up to-night."

"Ay! I thought so. And the young ladies are in their rooms?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Send the maid to see if Miss Swayne is still up. If so, I shall be obliged if she will step downstairs and speak to me."

Miss Swayne! He was aware that Margaret was still called so in the household, for she had not assumed the married style and title which were hers. She came at once on the summons.

"You have been left alone, Uncle Swinton! I am sorry, but I heard Mr. Hungerford was with you, and I have been putting my things together. If my father is no worse, I am leaving to-morrow."

"To-morrow?"

A faint color flushed her cheek at his surprise.

"Yes, it is better I should go. I have overstayed my invitation as it is, if not my welcome. Now Ernest is safely back again, and Dr. Gregson has sent in a note, Mrs. Swayne will not need help. It is not as if my father were likely to want me. They said he seemed uneasy if I stayed in the room."

"Sit down, my dear, for I have something to say to you. I thought you were with Dulcie." And then he added bluntly: "Dulcie wants you, doesn't she?"

Margaret's cheek changed again; there was some cause of pain behind its altered hue. "Poor child," she murmured, "she is very sad; she hardly knows what she wants. I did help her at first, but now I think I do more harm than good. I am a perpetual reminder of what she has lost. So, for her sake as well as my own, I have made up my mind to go."

"To go—where?"

little home at Barbizon. I could find it in my heart to wish I had never left it, never brought trouble here."

"The right thing, my dear, is for you to go to your husband, or at least to obey his wishes. You have not heard from him?"

Margaret's eyes fell, her hands clasped tightly together out of sight. "No," she said.

"Then I can tell you what he proposes, for I have just received his message brought by Hungerford. He suggests that you shall live at Grendon, going there, I suppose, as soon as the house can be made ready. You will have sufficient means."

George had thought of her! There was something in this discovery which moved her heart, though it might have been only the thought how best to dispose of an embarrassment. But Grendon, Dulcie's Grendon! She could not go there.

"Uncle Swinton, I have made up my mind. I am grateful to—to Mr. Gower for his kindness, but I have my cottage and my own means. I will not burden him in this way as well as in the other. I would rather be independent. The last thing I can accept from him is money."

She was gentle in her firmness, there was about her no touch of harsh self-assertion, but underneath the gentleness lay that obstinacy which, according to Lord Swinton, was ever in the Swayne family blood. Margaret and her father had split asunder on this same rock of her decided will, and here the fault of character was cropping up again, in another inconvenient place.

"My dear, when you married Gower you took the usual vow, did you not? You promised to obey him."

"Yes, but—"

"I don't want butts, I want you to listen. I am thinking of his happiness now, more than yours; though, necessarily and inevitably, of yours also. For when people are married, whether they are drawn by affection or otherwise, true happiness must be the happiness of both; one cannot suffer without both suffering together. No man can be happy with a wife who holds aloof from him, whether her reason is selfish or selfless. Gower's only chance lies in a united future, and I want you to bear this in mind, and bend your pride to it, whatever you elect to do. You are too proud, my dear, and have been from the beginning. There is too much at stake now for you to think of pride. I say nothing of money and position, for I know you would not be moved by arguments such as these. It is the salvation or ruin of the man whom once you promised to love, and who has done you no conscious wrong. I ask you to think of him, and of him only, and to put yourself aside."

She was touched by his argument, different as it was from anything which had been in her thoughts. There was silence for a full minute while she sat considering, her eyes cast down.

"How do I think of him—consenting to take his money? How can I help him with this for the sole tie between us, that I live in his house and at his cost?"

"You obey his expressed wish. It is the first step. From that the rest will grow."

(To be continued.)

### CUSTOMS FROM THE ARMY

When and Where Many Details of Dress Originated.

A public lecturer has been recently reminding us that modern clothing retains many features of great antiquity; and it is certainly a fact that the present-day hatband, for instance, can be traced back as far as the sixth dynasty in Egypt.

But how many customs that we have borrowed many details of modern dress and deportment from old Army customs? For example, the buttons to be found on the back of a man's coat—though not so much in evidence to-day—are a survival of the period when they were indispensable as a support for the old sword-belt. Again, the twentieth-century gentleman offers his left arm, as a rule, to his wife or sweetheart, not necessarily that his right may be free for paying hard cash, but because the thirteenth-century man found the practice essential, so that he might have his sword-arm free to defend his "lady-love" if need arose; and the custom clings. And from this practice arose the fact that a man's outer garments have buttons on the right side, whilst women's buttons are on the left.

The ancient gentleman found that that buttons on the left side of a jacket cannot easily be fastened with the left hand; but, as that was the only hand available, the other being reserved for sword practice, he originated the present custom. On the other hand, the lady wished the left arm free, because, through her right arm being rather often engaged by a gentleman, her pocket was placed on the left side; and thus she has doomed untold generations of women both to left-hand pockets and left-side buttons.

### WHAT CAUSES THUNDER.

Whenever there is a violent storm, many people make up their minds to look up the authorities and see what causes thunder. Then the storm passes, and they forget all about it. Thunder is the violent report which follows a flash of lightning. It commences at the same moment as the flash; but, as the sound travels only at the rate of about eleven hundred feet a second, while light does so at the rate of about 200,000 miles, the flash of the lightning is the first to be perceived.

The noise of the thunder arises from the disturbance produced in the air by the electric discharge, but why the sound should be so prolonged is differently explained. One hypothesis was that the sound is echoed from every precipice, from every building, and from every cloud in the sky. Another is that the lightning itself is a series of discharges, each producing a particular sound according to the distance at which it commences, and the varying densities of the portions of air it traverses before reaching the ear. A third is that the noise arises from the zig-zag movement of the electric fluid.

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"My four-year-old boy had eczema very bad last spring and lost his appetite entirely, which made him cross and peevish. I put him on a diet of Grape-Nuts, which he relished at once. He improved from the beginning, the eczema disappeared and now he is fat and rosy, with a delightfully soft, clear skin. The Grape-Nuts diet did it. I will willingly answer all inquiries." Name given by Canadian Postum Co., Windsor, Ontario.

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### PERFUME MORE COSTLY.

Prices of Essential Oils have Been Rising With This Result.

Many of the necessities of life have been rising in price recently, and a despatch from London, England, and the result has been trouble in various countries. But it is not only the necessities that are becoming more costly. The luxuries are also going up in price, and one of the luxuries that has recently exhibited the greatest activity in ascending is, to women, almost a necessity.

The price of perfumes has been increasing in a most alarming way, and from present indications is likely to continue to increase. There are various causes for this state of affairs. For years the prices of the essential oils out of which the costlier perfumes are made have been steadily rising, and now for various local reasons several have again taken a big jump forward. For example, bergamot, a base of many perfumes and scented hair-washes, is now quite costly, because of the Messina earthquake.

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