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Lord Cecil's Dilemma

—OR—

The Picnic

—in—

Woodall Forest

CHAPTER XXI.

My lord did not rely. His tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, and in his ears was a booming sound, like the roar of the sea.

"You will not ask me to acknowledge him again, papa; you must not; for, indeed, I cannot!"

He turned toward her an ashen face, and she never forgot the look of horror in his eyes.

She would have run to the bell, but he commanded her with a gesture not to move. Then he rose slowly, and helped himself to a glass of wine, his steps as feeble as those of a man of eighty.

"Gladys," he whispered, at length, "in years you are but a child, but I believe that you have the strength and resolution of a woman. I never wished, I never intended that you should know of the terrible pit of despair, disgrace and death over which I am suspended; but I am convinced that if the honored name of the Howards is to be saved from eternal infamy—if I am to be rescued from the gallows—you must know all—for to you alone can I look for salvation."

He again moistened his lips with the wine before him, and, with distended eyes and throbbing heart, Gladys listened to him.

"My child," continued the earl, "do not shrink from me, or believe me a murderer at heart. God and myself only know the torture my life has been since I killed Lady Marcia's lover—Edgar Emden."

"Gladys could not suppress a shriek, and clutched at her heart.

"You papa! You!" she whispered.

"I did—by accident. He attacked me from behind, believing that I was a rival, and in the struggle that ensued he was drowned in the lake. I was mad, Gladys, to do as I did. I foolishly hid the body. The terrors of the hangman were before me. I had everything to lose by risking a trial, and nothing to gain. I was the slayer of my sister's lover, while sneaking like a thief into my father's house. Should I not, at the best, forever forfeit Marcia's love, and, even if acquitted, after the exposure and disgrace of a trial, should I not be a marked man? He was dead, and nothing could help him. Thus I argued, and I carried the lifeless form of Edgar Emden into the library through the window. I deposited it in a passage that I thought was known only to me. I never dreamed, then, that the father of Sir Charles Hastings would be accused of killing Emden, and when he was arrested, some week later, I had to see him suffer. I dared not acknowledge my guilt; I dared not prove his innocence for the sake of the young wife I had married in secret. Do not think that I am a coward, Gladys. That one foolish mistake has cost me a lifetime of sorrow. But for you, I would give myself up, and let a jury of my countrymen decide the punishment I deserve."

He buried his face in his hands, and Gladys slipped to her knees beside him.

"People have attributed my lifelong sorrow to the loss of my sainted wife," he continued; "but they little dream that I was also suffering the unrest that follows a murderer."

"Papa, papa!" murmured Gladys, "let me comfort you always, let me alone share with you this horrible secret. I know that you are innocent of any real wrong; but, ah! if auntie knew, it would kill her. She still lives in the belief that the lover of her girlhood will come back again some day."

My lord pressed his daughter's hands firmly between his own; he held them so tightly that she with difficulty suppressed a cry of pain.

"Gladys," he went on, huskily, "Gladys, the secret is not our alone, it is shared by one other, who consents to keep it only upon terms which fall most heavily upon you."

"Lord Stanhope!" she faltered.

"No—Collins, the steward. This man is my half-brother; this man claims to be the rightful Earl of Swinford, but renounces all title, and swears never to betray me, if you will consent to marry Lord Cecil."

Lady Gladys shuddered. Her blood went icy cold, and she uttered a faint moan.

"He saw me hide the body, and has said not a word all these years. I marvel at it, but suppose that he has had some scheme in his brains that I cannot fathom. At first I feared that he had told Lord Cecil all; but he would not be made enough. He has merely instructed Stanhope to press his suit, and boasted of some power over me. My child, this is all I have to tell you; it is little enough, but it is terrible! In your hands is my safety from the gallows. After all these years, my judges would never believe me otherwise than guilty. In your hands alone is the honor of ahe Howards."

The girl's head had dropped upon his knees, and for some minutes she knelt in silence. She had heard every word of the awful story, and her brain was in a mad whirl. Had so much ever before been crowded into his life of a single human being in so short a time?

A few weeks since she was a light-hearted, happy child, whose deepest emotions had never been stirred. To-day she was a woman who had loved and lost, and whose life was burdened by the shadow of a terrible crime and its consequences. She alone could save her father—the last of a noble race of men—from a felon's grave, in whose ignominy she and Lady Marcia must inevitably share. But the price! It was more bitter than death! Rather would she have shed her heart's blood than become the wife of Lord Cecil Stanhope. She both hated and feared him.

Presently she raised her head. Her eyes were burning like stars; her face was white as paper; her breath was hot, and came in quick little gasps.

"Papa," she said, "I think that I am bravest when I can help those who are dear to me. As I can never marry Sir Charles Hastings, it will not make it so hard for me to wed Lord Cecil Stanhope. I am glad that you have told me everything, and my heart is filled with pity for you when I think of the long years of misery that have been yours, while I have been living in happiness and innocence."

There was a sudden catch in her voice, and, swiftly kissing the earl, she glided out of the room, to try and seek relief in tears.

The same day my lord wrote to Lord Cecil:

Lady Gladys consents. Do not press your attentions upon her for a few days, as she is naturally a little upset. Be kind and gentle, and you may yet win her love.

Lord Stanhope read this with a smile.

"Kind and gentle," he muttered. "I can never forgive my lady for the names she has bestowed upon me. However, I can be amiable when I choose, and rather than risk losing her, I will be upon my best behavior in the future. I will let Collins know the result. I can't think why that steward fellow takes so much interest in me. What on earth is the power that he wields over Howard? H'm; some boyish folly, and I suppose he will look for a handsome check on my wedding day. He shall have it, by Jupiter!"

CHAPTER XXII.

Some five weeks later the engagement between Lord Cecil Stanhope and Lady Gladys Howard was officially announced. To some it was a surprise, but everybody believed the match to be a most suitable one. The estates were two of the grandest in England, and were within a few miles of each other. The young people had known each other from childhood, and must have had every opportunity of studying each other's characters. It was no sudden burst of love's flame, whose fire would be but transient, but must be a solid respect, the result of many years of close intercourse.

Report said that Lady Gladys Howard was lovely beyond all comparison, and the intimates of Lord Cecil felt surprised that one so gentle and so sweet should favor the loud and horsey young peer. It was considered a shame that the Earl of Swinford's daughter should be fettered before she came into society. She had had no opportunity of seeing the world, and of making her choice of a lover among the hundreds of gallant gentlemen, who would be certain to pay her their devoirs when it was too late.

The engagement made but a ripple on the busy waters of society, because Lady Gladys was but little known. Attention was drawn to it on account of the sudden return of the Earl of Swinford after years of wandering. It was hoped that he would sustain the old reputation of the Howards by opening his doors hospitably to the world of fashion, but he did nothing of the kind, and the knowing ones prophesied that he would soon be off again, as he was a confirmed globe-trotter.

Immediately following the item concerning Lord Cecil and Lady Gladys came a most astonishing piece of news, which was sweet in the nostrils of the scandal-mongers. The society papers were full of it, and even the dull but respectable daily newspapers mentioned it. There could be no doubt of its truth, and it was really the choicest tid-bit of the year to the idle devotees of fashion, whose lives are made of little-tattle and vicious gossip.

This is what appeared in Society News:

ROMANCE OUTDONE. — Some twenty years since, Sir Charles G. Hastings, a worthy knight, and ambitious politician, was suddenly dragged from his high place in the estimation of the people, on the charge of murder most foul. His brother-in-law, whose place he had usurped in the ancestral home of the Emdens, suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. He was last seen with Sir Charles, engaged in a wordy warfare, and the servants say that blows were struck. After a patient trial he was discharged, a ruined man, to die in misery and oblivion. The son now appears on the world's stage in a melodramatic part. Some years ago his mother contracted heavy liabilities, which she was unable to pay; and the son, like a chivalrous hero of mediæval times, relieved his injudicious parent by wedding the daughter of their tyrannical creditor, without even looking at or speaking to his bride. Now comes the mystery. The plebeian Lady Hastings promptly disappeared, and the world knew little of the event. After all these years she has suddenly reappeared at Emden Hall to claim her rights. We shall watch the result with some curiosity, and as it is certain that Lady Hastings eloped with a man named Spiers after her marriage, the solution will porhably be the divorce court.

(To be continued.)

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GARDEN ROSES.

A single rose is fair to see, the dollar
kind the florist sells
Viewed from an artist's point of view
and tale of care and culture tells
And in its slender silver cup, provides
a touch of lovely grace,
Tall, straight, and perfect and precise,
a lamp to light a darkened place.
But there's a lovelier sight to see, the
roses in a garden grown,
Old-fashioned blooms of red and white
with all the petals fully blown.

The florist might not call them fine, the
artist's eye might fail to see
True beauty in so mixed a mass, but
still they mean a lot to me.
I've known this rich bouquet for
years, with every summer that
has been
Always upon the table there this glorious cluster I have seen,
And I can call them all by name, this
red one shading almost black
Has been a boyhood friend of mine—
a jacqueminot—best known as
Jack.

Paul Neyron with his heavy head of
pink has seemed to rule the place,
The giant of the garden plot, and
scoraful of Frau Druschki's grace.
And there's the golden Sunburst, too,
a glorious yellow, short of stem,
That table bowl were incomplete, unless it had a few of them.
Old friends since first this heart was
young, modest and brave and
loyal still,
Lighting our rooms from day to day
and never sending in a bill.

I will admit the florist's art and grant
the grace his blooms possess,
But those old-fashioned roses seem to
hold much more of loveliness,
And I can bend above a bowl some
gentle hand has filled with care,
And seem to see once more the smiles
of all my long-lost friendships
there.
I need no catalogue or guide, in bowl
or by the garden wall
Like old-time friends I know their
names, and I'm at home among
them all.

Painted Bunting is Most Colorful Bird.

The fanciest of American birds is the painted bunting. The department of agriculture says: "The male painted bunting is one of the most brilliantly colored birds of the United States." The upper part of the head and neck are shining purplish violet, the middle of the back yellowish green, wings and tail purplish blue and the underparts and rumps are vermilion or the brightest red. The female is dark green above and yellowish beneath.

This little jewel bird has not failed to attract popular attention and is known under many names. In Louisiana the French speaking people have called it the nonpareil (or unequaled) and le Pape (or the Pope). The last name has been contracted to pop and varied as red pop. Spanish speaking people in the United States know the bird as "mariposa" or butterfly bird and in English the bird has been variously called painted bunting, painted finch, paradise finch, Mexican canary and Texas canary. It is a persistent vocalist and likes the society of human beings.

Exodus of Females From Germany.

YOUNG GIRLS CROSSING INTO HOLLAND.

BERLIN.—Holland's frontier, made notorious during the war as a favorite exit from Germany for fugitive prisoners of war, is again coming into the limelight through the surreptitious crossing of young German girls anxious to get Dutch employment. It is estimated that Germany is already poorer by 20,000 female servants as a result of this practice. With high wages and attractive working conditions, Holland has become something of a "promised land" for German frauleins qualified as housemaids or cooks. Twenty to twenty-five guilders a month are paid beginners, while the more efficient receive from 40 to 50. Such pay means from 2,000 to 5,000 marks monthly at the present rate of exchange, about ten times more than help of this kind receives in Germany. Amsterdam firms and dwellings have acquired about 5,000 of the emigrants and there are about 3,000 at the Hague. Most of them have been drawn from the Rhineland and Westphalia, where labor exchanges have been established at various places in co-operation with Dutch exchanges. Women's organizations in the western German provinces are actively opposing the exodus because of the shortage of help in households and on farms.

The Oldest Thing Living.

They cut down one of the big softwood trees of the Pacific Coast a few days ago, and found there were 2,425 rings on the trunk. That is it had lived 2,425 years at least. Some 525 years before our Saviour came that tree began its life. It was creeping along towards its 2,000th birthday when America was discovered. What changes it saw, what generations of men passed under its shade, what races of birds and of animals! It was probably one of the very oldest living things in the world.

Eat MRS. STEWART'S Home Made Bread.—apr4,mo

Fashion Plates.

A CHIC AND CHARMING DESIGN.

3801-3793—Here is a very popular variation of the jumper dress—and a pretty design to wear with it. As portrayed, wool jersey embroidered in floss was used. The guimpe is of pongee with self frills and hemstitching for trimming. In duvetyn or crepe a trimming of grosgrain ribbon would be pleasing.

The guimpe 3801 is cut in 7 Sizes: 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44 and 46 inches bust measure. The Dress 3793 is cut in 8 Sizes: 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46 and 48 inches bust measure. The width at the foot is about 2 yards. This style is good for slender as well as for mature figures. The dress front is cut with fulness beneath the yoke extension of the back. To make up this style for a 38 inch size, requires 2⅝ yards of 36 inch material for the Guimpe, and 3⅝ yards for the Dress, of 40 inch material.

This illustration calls for TWO separate patterns which will be mailed to any address on receipt of 1,c. FOR EACH pattern in silver or stamps.

A PLEASING DINNER DRESS.

3796-3798—Softness and simplicity stamps this model as youthful and becoming. Crepe de chine trimmed with a picot edge and tiny roses and leaves of chiffon would make it very attractive. The roses could be in a color contrasting to that of the gown. With long sleeves one could have this in satin, taffeta or velvet, with trimming of embroidery or jet.

The Waist Pattern 3796 is cut in 8 Sizes: 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, and 44 inches bust measure. The Skirt 3798 is cut in 7 Sizes: 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, and 34 inches waist measure. The width of the skirt at the foot is about 2 yards. To make the dress for a medium size as illustrated in the large view will require 7¼ yards of 27 inch material.

This illustration calls for TWO separate patterns which will be mailed to any address on receipt of 15c. FOR EACH pattern in silver or stamps.

A DAINTY FROCK.

4025. One of the season's pretty models is here portrayed. Convenient pockets are placed under the tab extensions of the waist, which has long lines and girdle extensions which close over the back. White linen with frills and bows of organdy would be pleasing. Pongee is a natural shade with pipings of green crepe would be attractive.

The Pattern is cut in 7 Sizes: 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44 and 46 inches bust measure. A 38 inch size will require 4⅛ yards of 40 inch material. The width at the foot is about 2¼ yards.

Pattern mailed to any address on receipt of 15c. in silver or stamps.

A NEAT AND SERVICEABLE APRON.

4030. Percale with facings of linen is here depicted. Black sateen with cretonne would be attractive, as would also crepe with trimming of a contrasting color or with rack for a finish.

The Pattern is cut in 4 Sizes: Small, 34-36; Medium, 38-40; Large, 42-44; Extra Large, 46-48 inches bust measure. A Medium size requires 4½ yards of 36 inch material.

Pattern mailed to any address on receipt of 10c. in silver or stamps.

A GOOD APRON.

Pattern 3324 made the comfortable model. It is cut in 4 Sizes: Small, 32-34; Medium, 36-38; Large, 40-42; Extra Large, 44-46 inches bust measure.

Figured percale in white and black is here illustrated. One could have gingham, seersucker, lawn, alpaca, drill, or sateen. A Medium size will require 4⅛ yards of 36 inch material.

A pattern of this illustration mailed to any address on receipt of 15 cents in silver or stamps.

A BECOMING DRESS FOR WORK OR PORCH WEAR.

3848. Neatness and utility are expressed in this model. The closing is at the centre front, the lines are good, and comfortable, and the style has pleasing features. One could have this in checked gingham, with wash collar, belt and cuffs of white repp or linen. Other wash fabrics are equally desirable. For warmth, flannelette and gabardine are recommended.

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