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The Old Marquis
OR
The Girl of the Cloisters

CHAPTER XXXI
IN SWEET CONTENT.

"And break Mary's heart." Mary was the landlady's niece. "Lela, you are the sort of woman who brings about revolutions. Already you have cut Lovel to the quick by insisting that he shall not wait at breakfast."

"And listen to every word we say," she put in, with a smile.

"My darling, Lovel is deaf and dumb; he is faithfulness itself. If he heard you confess that you had committed a forgery, he would carry the secret to his tomb."

"I know; but, all the same, it is nicer to be by ourselves. I don't want to be waited on, and if you do, why, I'll wait on you; I'm quite as pretty as Mary, and I can hand the coffee and toast as well as Lovel."

"Ah!" he said, comfortably; "I see, I am to be a henpecked husband! All right, have it your own way! With that fond smile which sits so well on his handsome face. "And what's that letter about? I see it comes from the professor."

"Yes, dear grandpapa! He is so happy! They are making quite a fuss about him over there, and insist upon that he has been wasting all his learning on the desert air all these years! He sends his best wishes to you, Edgar, and— But there's the letter," and she held it out.

"No, you shall tell me," he said. "Dear old fellow! He is awfully good, and I'll try and make him admit that I'm not such a bad sort of fellow when he comes back. But as to reading his letter, my dear child, I couldn't read a line of it to save my life!"

Lela laughed and slipped the letter in her pocket.

"And what have you got?" she asked, peering prettily round the coffee urn.

"Oh, bills and, yes, a letter from the marquis."

"Ah!" and she grew suddenly grave.

"Yes," he looked at it. "There's not a kind word in it. I send you a check for the amount you ask— Ah, yes!" and he sighed. "Any amount of money he will send me, but not one word such as most fathers have to say to their sons! Ah! what's this?" and he stared at the postscript, written on the last page. "Why—" and he flushed and smiled.

"What is it, Edgar?" anxiously.

"No; don't tell me if you don't wish to!"

"But I do! I'll have no secrets from you!" he said. "And— and— besides, it is about you!"

"About me!" exclaimed Lela, turning pale as the vision of that awful meeting in the garden rose before her.

"Y—es! I can't understand it. Shall I read it? I wish to mention a subject that I had hoped would never be referred to again by either of us. I refer to my late librarian and his granddaughter, Miss Lela Temple."

Lela drew a long breath and came gliding round to him.

"Why should he speak of me? Ah, Edgar, he has found out that we are married!" and she trembled.

"No, no! Don't be frightened, my darling! Listen. Though I have made enquiries, I have failed to discover the whereabouts of these two persons. You, who, no doubt, have made enquiries on your own behalf, though I am convinced that you would not be so unwise as to ruin yourself by disobeying me, may have found them. If so, I shall be glad if you will let me know in what position they may be. I do not wish that any servant of mine should be in a condition of poverty, and shall be glad to be assured that such is not the case. That is all!" said Edgar, staring at the note.

"What does it mean?" faltered Lela.

"I don't know. I can't conjecture. If he were any one else, I should say that he was anxious that you should not be suffering from his cruel injustice and oppression, but—well, I never knew him to be pitiful or merciful before."

There was silence for a moment, then she said, in a low voice:

"What will you say?"

"What shall I say? Why—why, I shall say that I know where you are, and that you are certainly not in want."

And he smiled.

"I wish—I wish he could know, Edgar!" she whispered.

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He frowned and bit his lip. It was a perpetual remorse to him—this life of deception—the one thorn in the bed of roses.

"So he shall!" he said, firmly. "Nothing but dire necessity has kept me silent. He shall know, and very soon. If—he stopped suddenly, for he was going to say—"If Assassin wins the race, I shall be able to send this check back and have money enough to enable me to tell my father that I have lost the right to take money from his hands." But he stopped in time. He had just said that he would have no secrets from her, but he did not mean to ride this race without telling her.

He knew that the dread with which she would regard the idea of his riding a steeple-chase would be almost more than he could bear to see her suffering from.

"If a little event that I am hoping for comes off satisfactorily, Lela, I will tell him, and end this deception. There, don't say any more about it!"

And he soothed her with a kiss, and took up his time.

Luckily for him, Lela never thought of glancing at a newspaper, or she would not have failed to have caught sight of his name in the sporting column, which was full of a coming race, and had a great deal to say about the wonderful horse Assassin—its bad temper, and the pluck and racing capabilities of its noble owner.

It was full of it this morning, and Lord Edgar saw that the horse was a greater favorite than it had been—why, he knew not. With a little impatient sigh, he folded the paper and thrust it out of sight, and got his cigarette-case.

"And what's it to be to-day?" he asked. "London's delights are not nearly exhausted yet."

She smiled up at him, half ashamed of her delight in the sights and amusements. They had been up to town now nearly a week, and Lord Edgar had made those days a round of pleasure for her. After breakfast he would take her for a drive in the park in his tall dog-cart, with the much-beloved chestnut. Then they would lunch at home, or sometimes at Blanchard's or Verey's. In the afternoon they would go to some concert, or perhaps wander round a picture-gallery; then home to dinner—that delightful little dinner, so beautifully cooked and served, with Lovel to wait, not like a machine, but like a wizard guessing what they wanted before they asked for it. Ah, those little dinners! with Lord Edgar all to herself, sitting opposite her in his evening dress, so near that by stretching across the table they could touch hands, which they did often when Lovel had left the room for a moment; with the sweet little room softly glowing in the light of the wax candles reflected in the Venetian mirrors and ancient brass repoussé work; with the old china and antique bronzes; with the beautiful cabinet pictures, and the odor of crushed roses in the Etruscan vases.

She was Mrs. Lady Fane; in the future time—Lord Edgar talked of it sometimes, and she thought of it now and again as something vague and indistinct—in the coming future she might have, would have to preside at grand dinners, banquets, social and political; but would any of them be so perfect and delicious as those which were eaten in the dainty Albany chambers, with her darling, her lover, her husband, for sole companion?

Then, the dinner over, they would go into the little drawing-room—her boudoir, he called it—and she would insist upon his smoking a cigar, and as sure and certain as day followed day, she would find herself seated at his feet, with her head upon his knee.

"Nothing is better, I well know. Than Love; no amber in cold sea Or gathered berries under snow," sings Swinburne, and he is right.

Then Lovel would, after knocking discreetly, come in noiselessly with the tea; and it would be:

"Lela, I've got a box for the theatre in my pocket! What do you say?"

And she, after artfully ascertaining whether he wanted to go, would say "Yes."

He would always place her behind the curtains of the box, and more often than not would watch her face rather than the stage, reveling in the delight depicted in her eyes and on her lips. The face was always fairer to him than that of any one behind the footlights.

Sometimes, but not often, he would see some friend or acquaintance; but he never spoke, and would give them a bow and pass on.

The time had not come when he

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could introduce her as his wife. Heaven knows what they thought; he cared not.

Then, the theatre over, the miniature brougham would roll off to one of the best of the restaurants, and he would choose some dainty little dish for her; he had a fixed idea that, being so slim and fairy-like, she needed a great deal of keeping up and nourishment; an idea which caused Lela no inconsiderable amount of amusement; and they would go home to the pretty rooms again and talk over the evening.

Happy! How could they, loving each other as they did, be otherwise?

"What shall it be? Any shopping to do?"

Lela shook her head laughingly.

"No! Why, there is nothing left for me to buy!" she said. "Besides, do you think I have no pity, you poor, dear boy? The hours you have waited about in the brougham for me! Oh, by the way, Edgar, I forgot to tell you. Whom do you think I saw yesterday?"

"Can't guess. Who was it?"

"Why," and she blushed a deep crimson, "the Reverend Mr. Browne."

"The Reverend Mr. Browne? Oh, ah, yes! Did you? Where?"

"Fancy you forgetting his name!" she said with a pout. "In Pall Mall. I was sitting in the brougham outside your club, waiting for you, when I saw him walking along with a man—such a peculiar-looking man! It was the man with him who attracted my attention, or else I should not have noticed Mr. Browne. He was a man with a face like those children, dear—do you know what I mean?—without any expression. Just as if he were blind or deaf. But he was neither, for when I leaned forward and called to Mr. Browne—Did I do wrong, dear?"

"Wrong! Bless my soul, no!" responded Lord Edgar, frankly, and with a look of pleasure. "I wish I'd been there! What did he say? Did you ask him to come and see us?"

"No; I should have done so, but though he looked round—and so did the other man—he merely raised his hat, and they hurried on."

"George! that's strange! I wish he had stopped. I'll ask Clifford where I can find him. It struck me at the wedding that he was rather eccentric, but I took a great fancy to him."

"So did I," said Lela, softly. "He looked so pale and unhappy, as if he had some great trouble on his mind."

"Poor fellow! Perhaps he is poor. I wish I'd asked Clifford how much he gave him."

"It is not too late now," said Lela, gently. "But I haven't finished, Edgar. I told you I noticed the man who was with him; well, in the afternoon, while I was standing at the window here, I saw the same man waiting on the other side of the road, and when he came opposite he stopped and looked up at the window; but directly he saw me he pretended that he—he stopped and laughed—"wanted to get something out of his eyes, and they went on."

"Oh, come!" laughed Lord Edgar.

"Why should he do that? Why shouldn't he look up?"

"I don't know," she answered, laughing, too; "but I am sure he did not want me to see him. It was just the sort of thing a woman would do."

"Oh, indeed! What artful creatures women must be!"

(To be Continued.)

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AGAINST ONE BIG UNION.

OTTAWA, June 9. The Dominion Executive of the Great War Veterans of Canada, meeting here, has made a declaration of principles which include opposition to the underlying principles of the "one big Union," with its accord of Russian Bolshevism and German Spartacans.

A WOMAN IN IT.

NEW YORK, June 9. Ruth Law, who made a flight from New York to Chicago, is here to arrange a trans-Atlantic flight which will be made as soon as a multiple engine plane of the land type capable of carrying thirty hours' supply of fuel is ready. "The flight can be made from St. John's in less than nineteen hours," she said, "but I want

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