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**The Old Marquis;  
OR,  
The Girl of the Cloisters**

CHAPTER III.  
A GIRL'S SONG.

He threw the bridle to one of the grooms, stopped a moment to pat and thank the mare, as all men who love the horses they ride do, then strode to his room.

He put on evening dress, thinking that perhaps his father might by chance send for him; and knowing, or rather feeling that the marquis would be gratified by seeing that his son had some other suit besides the objectionable one of cords.

Dinner was served for him at one end of a magnificent but dreary dining room, and a couple of footmen, in the dark-blue Farintosh livery, waited in solemn state. It was an admirably selected meal, and well cooked, but poor Lord Edgar found it dull. He thought of his club, with its cheerful dining-room, and nice fellows to talk to, and he sighed; but still he did not regret remaining; not even when he was about to light a cigarette, and Mr. Palmer, who happened to come into the room with an opened bottle of claret, said: "The smoking-room is at the end of the left corridor, my lord," as a gentle and respectful reminder that smoking was not allowed in the dining-room.

"No, thanks, Palmer," said Lord Edgar. "I remember that family vault of a room. I'll go on to the terrace."

"His lordship's hat and coat," said Mr. Palmer, solemnly, to one of the footmen.

"And the goloshes!" said Lord Edgar, with a laugh. "Why, Palmer, it's as warm as the tropics!" and without waiting for the footman to return, he opened the French window and walked out.

The evening was warm and lovely, and as he lighted his cigarette he drew a long breath of keen delight, and glanced up at the closed windows of the marquis' apartments pityingly.

"Jove! how can he bear it!" he murmured. "Not a breath of air, and shut up in that awful stillness! I wonder whether I shall have the gout

and be like that! I hope I shall break my neck first!"

He sauntered along the terrace, looking up at the windows of the vast place, which would one day be his, and thinking what a pity it was that they should be so dead and silent, that there should be no faces, no voices behind them, until he came to the abrupt curve which, if he turned it, would bring him to the library windows.

He paused and looked wistfully, longingly; but he hesitated. To all intents and purposes that wing was hers. She herself had said that no one came there; his presence there in the morning had been almost an intrusion.

No, he would not trespass on the precincts of the abode sacred to the divinity in the cream dress! But as he turned the longing increased and became irresistible, and, yielding, he leaped the stone division and walked towards the library.

But nothing rewarded him for his pains. The windows were all shut and lifeless, and half ashamed of himself for an intruder, he was about to retrace his steps when he heard a girl's voice singing.

He knew the voice in an instant, though Lela had certainly not sung that morning. He could not see her, but he knew that she must be standing at one of the windows in the wing beyond the library, in the wing her grandfather and she occupied. In fear and trembling lest she should become aware of his presence and cease, he leaned against the wall and listened.

He could hear every word of the song, every note. It was a simple ballad, such as any young girl might sing, and yet it seemed to him the rarest poetry, the sweetest music.

For years afterward the refrain remained with him to haunt and agonize him.

"You gave me, love, wild rose, and mignonette,  
That morning, love, do you forget?  
Where in thy love—alas! why should I fret!  
Though love is gone, I have the flowers yet!"

Simple, childish words, made by some professional ballad writer, and yet they thrilled him.

Instinctively, drawn toward her by a magic cord, he approached the window, and stood before her in the golden sunset.

She did not start, but just as she had done in the morning, she looked at him with the large, half-sad eyes.

He stood for a moment, just as he had stood in the morning, abashed by the sweet serene purity that seemed to surround her.

"Am I intruding?" he said, looking up; the window just high enough for him to lean his arm on if he had dared. "I heard you sing, and could not help coming to thank you."

He was, you will notice, more fluent and self-possessed than in the morning; he had dined, was in evening dress, and the light was growing dim; those who have been, or are, in love, will understand me.

"I—thought I should like to stay for a little while," he answered, rather lamely. "You see, I haven't been to the Abbey for so long; it's three years."

"Yes," she said again, looking at him with the calm, serene eyes.

"Three years," he repeated, for the sake of saying something. "It is a long time, isn't it? If I go, I suppose I shouldn't come back again for another three!"

"Yes!" she said, once more; and he fancied—it could only be fancy, of course—that this time there was a touch of sadness in the little word.

He sighed and echoed her "Yes." She looked at him thoughtfully for a moment, then she said:

"Where do you go when you leave here?"

"Oh, to London!" he said. "You have been to London?"

She shook her head.

"No, I have not."

He laughed softly, remembering the sleeping librarian.

"Not! H'm. I should like to show it to you! After all, it is a wonderful place! Yes, I should like to show it to you! We would go—let me see, where should we go?" he paused.

She leaned forward, looking at him. There was a large diamond in his shirt front, and her eyes wandered from it to his face with sweet, innocent intentness.

"Well, we'd go to the Zoological Gardens! You'd see all the animals there."

"Yes!" she said, smiling at his eagerness.

"And then we'd go to the picture galleries; and then to the theaters! Have you ever been to a theater?"

"Never," she answered, quietly.

He smiled and looked down at his boots—not muddy now, but shining patent leather.

"How I should like to take you to them all; I think you would enjoy it!"

"Perhaps," she said, quaintly; "after all there is nothing like the country."

"For angels!" he said, impetuously. She did not catch the words, and leaned forward.

"For—those who like it!" he said, covered with confusion. "Well, but come!" he added, "you don't know much of the country; do you take any walks?"

She shook her head.

"Grandfather and I walk in the park, sometimes."

"The park!" he said, contemptuously. "Why that is nothing! I mean the real country, the hills and the valleys far away from here."

She shook her head, and one stray curl escaped from its bands and fell across her forehead.

"I have never been away from the park," she said.

"Then— he paused; it was a bold step he was going to take—"then will you come with me?"

"With you? Where?"

"I am going for a drive to-morrow. There is a mail phaeton which nobody uses; it is getting rusty in all its joints. Come with me to-morrow and we will find out the prettiest drives. Don't say no!"

She looked at him, not fearfully, as she should have done, but doubtfully.

"I will ask grandpa," she said. "If he says I may come, I will."

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looked quite Lord Fane, the next Marquis of Farintosh.

Possibly—who shall undertake to read a young girl's mind—she was considering how vastly dress improves even a man. But anyhow, she was silent for the space of a minute, then she said with a start, as she awoke from her reverie:

"My song? Ah, yes, I was singing to grandpa; but he has gone to sleep. It is his favorite song."

"I don't wonder at that!" he said. She looked at him.

"It is a silly little song," she said, after a pause, "but he likes it because it is old-fashioned. I found it in one of the old music books."

"If you could find some more!" he said, fervently. Then he looked at his cigar. "I beg your pardon—I forgot," and he raised his hand.

"Don't, please," she said, simply. "I like to see the smoke rising against the sky. And you have not gone?"

"Gone? No," he answered. She smiled, and leaned forward to pick a rose that grew near the window.

"They told grandpa that you were going to-night."

"Then they were wrong," he said, in his curt fashion. "I didn't mean going, and I don't, and here I am."

In his defiance of the popular idea of his departure, he spoke loudly; she looked within the room, half nervously, then smiled at him.

"Grandpa is asleep," she explained. "He always goes to sleep when I sing to him."

Lord Edgar came closer and looked into the room.

It was a small room comfortably furnished; in an easy chair the librarian sat locked in the arms of slumber.

"Don't be afraid," he said, lowering his voice. "I shall not wake him. And you thought I had gone? Well, I was going?"

"Yes," she said, seriously, "and why didn't you?"

He looked down at his cigar for a moment; should he tell her that the hope of seeing her again kept him? No, he would not.

"I—thought I should like to stay for a little while," he answered, rather lamely. "You see, I haven't been to the Abbey for so long; it's three years."

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"If he says I may come, I will."

Lord Edgar was fain to be content with that; he knew that no amount of pressing would get her beyond that, and he relaxed into silence.

Suddenly she extended a white hand, and pointed to the sky.

"Did you see that?"

"What?" he demanded, staring blankly at the heavens.

"That star! It was a falling one. I saw it fall. If grandpa were here he would say it was unlucky."

"Would he? Why?" demanded Lord Edgar.

"Because—are you laughing?"

"Laughing!" he responded, drawing nearer the window. "Look at me!"

"I thought you were laughing! Grandpa gets all his magic out of an old book in the library. And he says that if two persons see a falling star—see it when it begins to fall—that it means ill-luck for both of them. Look!" she exclaimed, suddenly laying her hand on his coat sleeve.

Lord Edgar swung round, and followed with his eyes the indication of her finger, and was in time to see a star fall through the evening sky.

"I saw that one. Well?"

"Did you? Well, then, you and I have seen our fate."

"Our fate?" he repeated, gazing up at her as if she were a prophet in her cream dress.

She nodded.

"Yes, I think grandpa half believes in it, nonsense though it is."

"I hope," he says, "that he will take it that it is our fate to go for a drive together to-morrow!"

She smiled down at him, and slowly pulled a leaf from the stem of the rose which she had taken up from the window sill.

"That would be a very pleasant fate," she said, softly.

"Oh, you must come!" he said, eagerly. "Where shall we go?"

"Hush!" she put up her finger to her lips. "You are waking grandpa; he is awake now. I must go. Good-night, Lord Edgar!"

"Good-night!" he said, and put up his hand.

She hesitated a moment, perhaps suddenly reminded, by pronouncing his name, of the social distance between them; then she slowly extended her hand and let him take it.

(To be Continued.)

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