

ONLY A BOY.

BY L. VAN LINDON.

"Has your fair-haired Saxon been with you to-day? I have been watching for his appearance as the signal for my departure, and it is the first time I have ever been so agreeably disappointed in him. Perhaps he has come and gone. What a penitential look of woe he is! But then, who would be, with the encouragement you give him? Look, why will you?"

"The speaker, a lady of twenty-five or thirty, with a rather plain, but not disagreeable face, and well-rounded forms, was evidently earnest, in spite of her efforts to be jocular. She had dropped in for a morning on her friend, Miss Divina, but from her look in her soft brown eyes it was evident that she meant to make it one of advice. Cleo Lynn, that was her name, if her friends had their eyes shut she would try to open them."

"I am sure I don't know what you mean. What has poor Eugene done that he should be so completely out of your good books? I was misled away from him as if he had the plague. If you saw a little more of him you would know he was just an earnest, best, dearest little fellow going."

"He may be all that; but why should you run him? You know he is not a care for him, and that if you could you could never marry him."

"Marry! He is a penniless, wretched, wretched he is! But then, who would be, with the encouragement you give him? Look, why will you?"

"He has a man's intentions, and he is two or three years older than I am, though he may not think so. If you do not care for his happiness take warning and look out for your own. Indeed, you may not think so, but I know men more than passing well, and of all those in your train Eugene Estey is the most dangerous. A shadow passed over Estey's face, though he did not intend to get angry. He was a shadow, and the most reckless. Take my advice and be honest with me on one day you will have your regards."

"Thank you for your advice. Now let us talk of something else. What is the news from headquarters? Have you seen anything of that blessed Parker lately? It is true that the season will open a week later than was expected, and that they are going to turn the Vandeville inside out for the season? I would like to see the man who arranged my summer vacation accordingly. I have half a notion to run across the herring pond. Martha is wild to go, and I confess I am tired of this here, and want to see how it is abroad."

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Colonel Creston being interviewed on the subject of Eugene Estey, stroked his mustache, and declined to make any statement. Probably he had his opinion, and so had Mrs. Lynn.

There was no doubt about the wealth of Edgar South, though he was known about as well on the English turf as on the Pacific coast. He was a plunger, and after the most approved style, and had troops of admirers wherever he went.

For a while—some weeks—he was quite the fashion, being received whenever he made his appearance there. He was an authority on turf, sporting and historical matters, and played a wonderful game of cards, and his gallery he led the leading string, and with the foils ranked equal to the professional. He was the man who could win Leola Divina.

One evening Captain Chester brought in a friend, a young American. He was slender looking in his build, and rather an effeminate face, yet there was something in his fine eyes, that made his countenance from lack of strength.

"My friend Estey," said Chester, in his off-hand way, to two or three. "I caught him hanging around in a very lonesome condition for some time. I'd bring him here, where he could see some of his fellow countrymen, and, if he wanted, park a little of our national game of draw. Shakes hands with him, and make him feel at home."

The greater part of the party were Americans. It was an informal sort of affair, its members coming and going. Estey was welcome enough, and not through any sinister intentions. They played cards there, and sometimes for high stakes, but that was not the object of the machinery by which they kept together, and it was kept quiet outside.

It was a pleasant, informal sort of game, with a tacit limit of about ten dollars in American money, and was thirty dollars or so to the amusement of the rest of the players, and the half-dozen spectators.

He looked up with unobscured eyes, after having drawn in vain to three small ones of a kind.

Your fall is good, Brother Estey, very good. I am just in the vein to be a victim, and I shall draw out before I get with you. Here, South, take my place, and see if you can change the lock of this confounded chair. I never sat in it yet that I have not broken it, and ten up high before the draw. You know Estey? He's from the States lately. Guess you met him in New York."

The odds were half a million to one that he had not, but Captain Chester never thought of that.

"I don't know that I ever met the gentleman," began South, in a hesitating tone.

"But I have met you," interposed Estey, fiercely. "If you come into this game I must retire."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed South, staggered, and something more, by the direct insult.

"You know what I mean, and you know me. I saw you turned out before I got with you. Here, South, take my place, and see if you can change the lock of this confounded chair. I never sat in it yet that I have not broken it, and ten up high before the draw. You know Estey? He's from the States lately. Guess you met him in New York."

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