



**For Love of a Woman;**  
OR,  
**New Romeo and Juliet.**

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE APPROACH OF THE SHADOW.

The days passed in what her ladyship declared to be a tediousness almost insupportable. She had the best rooms of the best hotel, but they were not grand enough for her fine London taste; and as for the scenery, Lady Grace would have exchanged the whole Alpine range for a quarter of a mile of Hyde Park. She would have been happy enough if Cecil could have spent every minute of his time with her; but this Cecil could not do. In his present condition of mind the society of his engaged wife nearly drove him mad, and he spent most of his time either beside the marquis's bed or at the villa.

"Surely you do not intend to play the part of sick nurse, my dear Cecil!" Lady Grace remonstrated when, on the third morning after their arrival, he told her that he could not go out riding with her, because he had promised to sit with the marquis.

"Not exactly that, Grace," he replied, quietly. "But I am naturally anxious about him and wish to be with him, more especially as, strange to say, he seems to desire my presence."

"He must have changed to an extraordinary extent!" she retorted, with something like a sneer on her exquisitely carved lips.

Cecil nodded.

"Yes," he assented, simply. "He has changed—for the better. I suppose we shall all feel the approach of the Great Shadow! Poor old man!"

She stared at him, then laughed—a cold laugh of amusement, almost of mockery.

"Really, you are the most forgiving of men, Cecil!"

"I'm afraid not," he said, stifling a sigh. "I'm sorry I can't go with you, Grace."

"Oh, I daresay you will be happier with the marquis!" she retorted, as she turned to the glass to arrange her riding-hat. "I only hope and trust that the marquis will soon get better, and allow us to leave this place. I was never in a duller hole in my life."

"They call Pesca pretty, too," he replied, absently, as he followed her out and helped her to mount.

Then he lit a cigar, and was going across to the villa, his mind heavy with thought, when suddenly Percy Levant stopped in front of him and raised his hat.

Cecil's face reddened for an instant;

then, as he responded to the greeting, he said:

"I had expected to see you before this, Mr. Levant. Will you walk upstairs?"

Percy Levant declined the offer.

"What I have to say will take but a few minutes," he said, gravely. "We neither of us desire a prolonged interview."

"I am at your service," returned Lord Cecil, with a slight bow.

Percy Levant eyed him with a strange expression, scarcely that of resentment as of dull, heavy sadness.

"I presume, my lord, you conceive that I am here to demand from, or offer both of us—both of us!" he added, grimly.

"I can only say that I am prepared to accept any proposal you may have to make, Mr. Levant," said Lord Cecil.

"But I am obliged, in honour, to say this—I don't want you to take it as an apology; great heavens, no—but I'm bound to say that the words you heard me address to Miss Marlowe the other evening were uttered in complete ignorance that her word was pledged to you or any other gentleman."

Percy Levant bowed.

"Were you in ignorance that your word was pledged to another lady?" he said, in a low voice.

Lord Cecil's face flamed, then grew pale, and he sprang from his lounging attitude against the mantel-shelf to an upright position; but, with a palpable effort, he restrained himself.

"That is a rebuke which I have deserved and must submit to, Mr. Levant," he said, grimly. "It is true that I am engaged to Lady Grace Peyton, and that I had no right to address Miss Marlowe as I did, but—he turned his face away for a moment—but I think if you knew all the circumstances, you—even you—would feel more inclined to pity than to condemn me. But I don't appeal to your consideration. As I said—with a touch of hauteur—"I am at your disposal, in any way and at any time."

"You mean, of course, that you are ready to fight, my lord?"

"You interpret my meaning," replied Lord Cecil, calmly. "I have no doubt you feel aggrieved. I should if I stood in your place. I have no doubt Miss Marlowe—his lips quivered—"has told you of our past—our past relationship—"

"Miss Marlowe has told me nothing; but I have drawn my own conclusions. I have been content to accept Miss Marlowe's silence—complete silence—respecting the past."

"Ah, yes," said Cecil, with a repressed sigh. "What does it matter to you, who have the priceless boon of her present and future love?"

The words were wrung from him, and he would have recalled them if he could have done so, when he saw the effect they produced upon Percy Levant, whose face grew white and whose eyes flashed.

But he, too, seemed to be striving for self-restraint.

"I am afraid you do not know all, my lord," he said. "But to come to the business which brought me here. Miss Marlowe and I are to be married on the sixteenth."

Lord Cecil bit his lip and nodded.

"So soon?" he said, almost inaudibly. "Well, sir, why do you tell me this?"

"Because I have to make a proposal to you, my lord. You expect a challenge from me?"

"I have expected it for the last three days, Mr. Levant."

"Will you, my lord, permit me to withhold that challenge until the sixteenth?"

Lord Cecil stared at him.

"Till the day of your marriage?" he exclaimed.

"Exactly," returned Percy Levant. "Such a request astonishes you, no doubt. It is only natural that you should demand my reasons for this delay; but I shall ask, as a favour, that you permit me to keep them to myself until the sixteenth. I have another request to make, which, I fear, you will deem as strange as those which have preceded it."

"Go on!" said Cecil, knitting his brows.

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he said, with a quiet dignity, "but I don't think I can do anything else that grant them. After all, I have no claim for satisfaction from you; the offence lies with me."

"Just so, my lord," said Percy Levant, taking his hat. "I wish you good-morning. On the sixteenth you and I shall understand each other more easily."

"I hope so," said Cecil, grimly. "One moment," he added, hesitatingly, as Percy Levant turned to leave the room. "Is—Miss Marlowe in Pesca?" he asked, in a low voice.

"Miss Marlowe is in Pesca, my lord," replied Percy Levant, looking at him steadily.

Cecil's face grew hot.

"Will you tell her that—that I knew nothing of her engagement? No; tell her nothing!"

"I think that is far the better course, my lord," said Percy Levant; and with another bow he went.

CHAPTER XXXVI.  
CONSPIRATORS.

Mr. Spenser Churchill has been having the very good time which a man might be expected to have who has had a magnificent palace with a host of obsequious servants placed at his disposal, and who is monarch of all he surveys—of another person's property.

He enjoyed himself most amazingly. He went on pleasant little excursions to the neighbouring towns; he ordered the richest and most luxurious dinners; he accepted the best of the numerous invitations which Lady Despard's neighbours freely accorded him, as a friend of her ladyship, left in charge of the Villa Rimini, and wherever he went he was voted a most charming and agreeable companion.

Indeed, since Percy Levant's departure no one had so completely won the hearts of the Florentine ladies as Mr. Spenser Churchill.

And do not for a moment suppose that the good man gave himself up to a carnal enjoyment without giving thought to his less fortunate fellow-men. No! The eminent and tender-hearted philanthropist remembered his poor brethren, and gave such touching accounts of the various charitable societies with which he was connected—the Sweeps' Orphanage, the Indigent Knite Grinders' Society, the Society for the Distribution of Knives and Forks to the South Sea Islanders, and so on, that he succeeded in collecting a very tidy sum for these eminently deserving and practical charities; and everybody agreed that if ever there was a man too good for this sinful and selfish world, Mr. Spenser Churchill was indeed that individual!

And so the days passed pleasantly—and profitably—and on the morning of the sixteenth Mr. Spenser Churchill was sitting over the second bottle of Lady Despard's choicest claret, with a cigarette between his lips, and his benevolent eyes half-closed with his expression of bland peace and serenity which only the truly good can experience, when a servant brought him a letter.

He eyed it with sleepy indifference until he saw the writing and the man had left the room; then he tore the letter open eagerly. It ran:

"Dear Churchill—the marriage takes place to-morrow morning, Com-

without fail, to the Villa Vittoria, here, at four o'clock to-morrow afternoon. L. P."

Mr. Spenser Churchill's face grew radiant.

"I knew he'd do it! I knew it! What an eye for character I have! I should have made a good general! I know how to pick my men. I was confident Percy would do what I wanted! To-morrow! Oh, yes, I'll be there! Spenser, my dear friend, you have won the trick; you have—"

He stopped, and a shade crossed his benevolent face. "I wish I'd made it twenty thousand, instead of ten," he muttered, wistfully.

"I might just as well have done so—he would not have said anything, and she wouldn't have missed it. Why, her mother's portion of settlement money will bring her five-and-twenty thousand a year, and that will which the marquis is not capable of altering makes her the mistress of all his money. Yes, I might just as well have had twenty. However—and the smile beamed out again—"dear Percy shall make it up to me. He wouldn't like his wife to know of our little contract, I should think, and I might feel it my duty to tell her, unless—unless he made it worth my while to hold my tongue. Yes, Churchill, my dear friend, you have warmed your nest pretty well; and now—filling his glass—"now for the enjoyment. No more of these beastly charitable societies; no longer any need for playing the saint. Let me see—I'll live in Pesca, I think, most of my time. A man can enjoy himself in Pesca without a parcel of fools interfering or holding him up to censure! In Pesca or—yes, Constantinople. That's not bad! Oh, what a time I will have! And Cecil, dear Cecil, who used to sneer at me and treat me as if I were an impostor; I think, yes, I think, dear Cecil, I shall have the laugh on you this time—you and your beautiful bride! For I'm afraid I shall feel it my duty to tell you how completely you have been fooled. Yes, I think I must do that, really! To-morrow! To-morrow the new life begins. Hem! Well, the old one hasn't been so bad! The charitable business has paid it, certainly has paid; but no more of it. I'm sick of it and the whole cant of it. I'll enjoy myself in a proper fashion—enjoy myself in my honestly earned wealth. Let me see. Ten thousand pounds, with what I have—ahem!—saved, together with, say, a thousand or two a year out of dear Percy—how grateful he will be, of course—will make a nice little income. Spenser, my boy, you are a genius, and you ought to have been a general. Here's your health and your future happiness!"

And, with a chuckle, he filled his glass till it ran over, and drained it at a draught.

The Italians are not fond of high houses, and the Villa Vittoria, like most of its fellows in Pesca, covered a long space of ground, its rooms being arranged on two stories, with very few stairs and fewer corridors.

The apartments which the marquis occupied for his own personal use consisted of a sitting-room, and a dressing-room and bedroom adjoining, the latter divided from the sitting-room by heavy curtains. On the other side of the centre room was a small ante-room which the marquis had not used; it was intended as a reception-room for trades-people or persons who paid visits of business.

(To be Continued.)

**Fashion Plates.**

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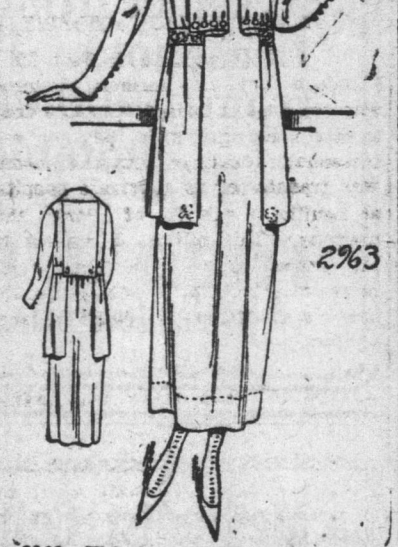


2940—Serge, gabardine, velvet, corduroy, taffeta, voile, crepe de chine and all wash fabrics are good for this style. The blouse is made to slip over the head. The skirt is a two piece model.

This Pattern is cut in 4 Sizes: 8, 10, 12 and 14 years. Size 10 will require 4 1/2 yards of 30 inch material.

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2963—This is a good style for serge, taffeta, satin velvet, gabardine or tricotine. Braid or embroidery will be a good decoration for this style.

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