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Phyllis Dearborn

OR, THE
Countess of Basingwell

CHAPTER XXX.

"I don't quite see how it can be done," he said; "but of course, if it is possible I shall be pleased to do so."
 "I will read it aloud to you," said Lady Basingwell. "Will not that do?"
 It was such a simple device, yet so adequate that the lawyer looked at her with approval.

"Hm!—yes," he said. "Be pleased to read, my lady."

So she read, changing the names throughout so that he should not be able to recognize the parties to the settlement, and he declared the paper to be in order. She paid him his fee, though he would have preferred to charge it against her, as the beginning of future business. Then she returned to her mother's.

"Well," said Lord Gree, "was the document in order?"

"Perfectly. Do you wish any letter from me so that I shall be compromised?"

"I ask nothing but your love," he answered.

"You have it, my lord," she said. "But you need expect little exhibition of it until this matter is ended. I am not quite iron, although I may impress you so, and it tries all my strength to live the life I am living. When will the heiress come to claim her own?"

"In a week or two."

"In a week or two! You are mad. She must come certainly within the week. I can bear it no longer than that."

"And you will be ready to go with me as soon as she is recognized as heiress of Basingwell?"

"That moment," she answered.

"Then I will hasten matters, for that reason alone. By the way, what have you done with the confession of the old earl?"

"I have it in safety at the castle."

"Will you be ready to give it up if it is asked for?"

"Yes. Anything you wish I will do."

He kissed her, and she did not resist him; but when she was alone in the cab she clenched her soft white hands in their exquisitely-fitting gloves and murmured:

"Ah, my Lord Gree! I am falling; but I am falling, like Samson with ruin all about me."

It was four days later than that, when Lionel was interrupted in the library by a lackey saying that a gentleman and a lady wished to see him.

"Did they not give you any cards?" asked Lionel, who was not in the best of moods these days.

"I asked the gentleman, your lordship, and he said you would not know"

either of them and that it was a call of business."

"Then let them come in here," said Lionel, shortly.

He rose when a gentleman of good presence, and of the unmistakable deportment of the man of law, came into the library, accompanied by a young lady of perhaps twenty years of age, though her age must have been a somewhat doubtful matter to any observer. He scarcely looked at her, except to bow; then he turned his eyes inquiringly on the gentleman.

"My name," said the gentleman, "will be unknown to you; and the nature of my business must be my excuse for this intrusion. I am James Stillman, of the law firm of Stillman, Stillman & Travers. This young lady, whom we will call Miss Phyllis Dearborn for the present—Are you ill, my lord?"

"No wonder he asked. At the name of Phyllis there had risen before him, like a sudden phantom, the image of the Phyllis whom he had known, and who had never stepped from the niche she had filled, from the first, in his memory. It was the sickening thought of how his life had been wrecked since then that somehow smote him most, and he had leaped from his chair as one struck.

A look of alarm had shot into the face of the girl at his sudden action, and she had looked furtively at the door; but his answer had reassured her, and she had become sympathetic in an instant.

"No, I am not ill. It is nothing," he said.

By what strange freak of fortune was it that he had never heard the full name of his Phyllis.

"You must wonder what has brought me here with this young lady," said Mr. Stillman, taking up the conversation as if it were an interrupted speech, "and I will frankly tell you. Nothing less than your well-known probity of character."

"Oh!" said Lionel, impatiently, "you wish my name to a subscription. I am very busy, and if you will let me have the paper at once, and assure me that the object is a good one, I shall be happy to put my name down for a reasonable amount."

Mr. Stillman let him finish, as if he would thereby set him an example of careful and patient listening.

"You are mistaken, my lord; and while I will admit that your time must be engrossed by many cares"—Lionel, leaned back with a sigh, as one saying to himself that he might as well listen—"I am able to state positively that the business I come on is of more importance than any thing you may know of."

"You will oblige me greatly, sir, if you would state what it is without this preface," said Lionel.

"Some preface and a few patiently answered questions are in a measure a necessity," answered the deliberate Mr. Stillman. "Will you tell me if you recall the night the late Earl of Basingwell died?"

Lionel was alert in an instant. The matter of the dying man's struggle to do some one justice had never wholly left his mind, notwithstanding that any actual effort to learn any more had been finally given up.

"I remember perfectly," he answered. "What do you know of the matter? How do you know of it?"

"In good time, your lordship," said Mr. Stillman, deprecatingly. "You do remember how anxious he was that a certain document should be found,

a day or two from school with bilious, sick headache. I have taken doctor's medicine and other preparations, which did little good."

"When I had the sick headache I would vomit a lot and could keep nothing on my stomach. My mother got Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills and I was soon improved and continued the treatment until entirely cured. My condition generally was greatly benefited, and I am now in the best of health."

Mr. J. J. Keohan, J. P., writes:—"This is to certify that I am personally acquainted with Miss Cora Cochran and believe her statement in regard to Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills to be true and correct."

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Miss Cora Cochran, Sallsbury, N. B., writes:—"I was nearly always troubled with headaches, and every two or three weeks would have to lose

but rendered irritable by Mr. Stillman's prolixity.

"Lady Basingwell," said Mr. Stillman, "I call upon you to tell us what that paper contained."

CHAPTER XXXI.

"By Heaven! Mr. Stillman," exclaimed Lionel, "but this passes all effrontery I ever heard of. How dare you address my wife, Lady Basingwell, in such a manner?" and he advanced toward the man of law with so furious a countenance that the latter very quickly placed himself behind a substantial chair.

"I meant no offense, my lord, none whatever," he hastened to say. "I have reason to believe that Lady Basingwell has been aware of the existence of such a paper, and I have taken the liberty—I admit that it seems like a liberty, quite unwarranted—of asking her to produce it. Will you ask her to do so, my lord?"

Lionel turned to Flora, who had watched and listened quite unmoved.

"I asked you, Lady Basingwell," he said, "to come here at this man's request. I know nothing of his errand or motives. If you wish I will have him ejected from the house."

Flora could not repress a gesture of admiration at the masterful manner of Lionel. Mr. Stillman grew red and white by turns—red at the proposed indignity, and white for fear it would be executed on him.

"It would be useless," said Flora, calmly; "though he might have accomplished his purpose without so much foolish effort at effect. I have the document he speaks of, and I will procure it if you desire it."

"If it be a document in which I have any interest, I beg that you will procure it at once," answered Lionel, as icily as she spoke.

Without any further words she arose and left the room.

"I hope your lordship—" began Mr. Stillman.

"It will be just as well to spare me and yourself," said Lionel, coldly.

"Without knowing your errand I am of the opinion that your attempt at dramatic effect has been of childish inutility."

Mr. Stillman could not but feel the justice of Lionel's rebuke, but he was angered by it—angered the more, no doubt, that he did feel the justice of it. There was nothing further said until Lady Basingwell returned. She entered the room in the same easy, collected, indifferent manner that she had left it, and in her hand was a document which she handed to Lionel.

Then she sat down, curious to see the issue of the conference.

Lionel slowly opened the paper, giving a bow of inquiry to his wife and to the girl who called herself Phyllis Dearborn. Then he read it. There was nothing in it that the reader does not know; but it was of startling novelty to Lionel, and he devoured it rapidly. Then he read it over again; but the second time it was for the purpose of collecting his thoughts.

"My compliments to Lady Basingwell, and ask her if she will do me the honor to come to the library," said Lionel, to the lackey.

While the man was gone there was no effort at conversation made by Lionel, and Mr. Stillman wore the air of finding it impossible to use his eloquent tongue until the advent of Lady Basingwell. She did not keep them long, but presently swept into the room with an air of haughty pride which had of late been her distinguishing characteristic. She bared, noticed the girl, who shrank from her with a sort of fear; and Mr. Stillman might as well have not existed.

"You sent for me, my lord," she said to Lionel.

He put a chair where she could sit down, bowing with the most ceremonious politeness.

"I regret disturbing you," he said; "but this gentleman requested your presence, and I look to him to justify his request."

"Do not fear, my lord," said Mr. Stillman. "Let me say to you, my lord, that the paper which the dying earl tried so hard to tell you about, was nothing less than his written confession,"—he looked with a sort of triumph at Lady Basingwell, who was listening with a languid interest that did not change at his words—"a written confession, my lord."

"Confession of what, sir?" demanded Lionel, suspecting some mystery,

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In order that justice might be done somebody, unnamed, unknown."

"I remember perfectly," answered Lionel, with difficulty refraining from asking questions; but restraining himself from a feeling of the usefulness of trying to hasten Mr. Stillman.

"I can tell you where that document is, my lord," said Mr. Stillman, solemnly.

"Then I beseech you to do so," said Lionel.

"I can tell you what wrong it was that should be righted."

"For Heaven's sake man, do it, do it!" cried Lionel, half-angrily.

"You said that night to that dying man, in the hearing of several witnesses," went on the imperturbable Mr. Stillman, "that you would do justice at any cost to yourself."

"I needed neither dying man, nor witnesses, nor promise, to make me willing to do any justice in my power then or now."

"I believe it, my lord, from all I have ever heard of you. But forgive me if I seem prolix or far from the point. May I ask that Lady Basingwell be asked to favor us with her presence here?"

"This passes all decency, Mr. Stillman," said Lionel, angrily. "Make known your errand to me alone. It is not—"

"I beg of you, my lord," pleaded Mr. Stillman. "What I ask is in the interests of the justice you have promised to see done."

Lionel remembered what his wife had confessed to him a few days before, and his hand fell on the bell-rope and pulled it.

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THE NATION'S NEED.

At this time of great national emergency it is imperative that every citizen should realize the vastness of the work which Great Britain has to perform and should so act that the strength of the nation may be put forth. Not only must every citizen, but in order that the work may be well within the nation's strength, must pull together.

The Allied fleets have driven the enemy's ships from the seas, and have established a blockade of the enemy's coasts. The enemy are thus prevented from carrying on their foreign commerce except to a very small extent, their income is seriously curtailed and their financial strength diminished. Moreover, the fleet has enabled both the British people and their Allies to draw abundant supplies of food, of material and of munitions from all parts of the world to conduct their foreign commerce as usual, and to maintain their income at a high level. The straits of the Dardanelles and of the Bosphorus, indeed, the only remaining impediment to the overseas commerce of the Allies.

On land the Allies have added greatly to their military strength, and now to weak ever since war was declared only actually but relatively the enemy. Germany's hopes of victory depended upon a short and swift war. These hopes have been completely dispelled.

In a long war success depends mainly upon the respective material resources of the combatants, and the conquest power of one of these to maintain, or to add to, its fighting strength when the other's is diminished, or is not capable of expansion. It is not in doubt that the material resources of the Allies, when fully mobilized and wisely controlled, will be

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