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THE QUEEN OF THE SEASON

"Take care that you do not play with your prize too long," the countess warned her. "Men sometimes grow impatient of so much cooing, and revenge themselves. There are girls as fair and more prudent than you, who would wish for nothing better than a change of consoling the lover you trifle with."

Lady Esseyln spoke of the marquis, but her stepdaughter thought of Sir Innis, and turned pale. She had seen him greeted with smiles, and counted and flattered by the mothers of pretty daughters who would have no objection to be wooed by the stately, handsome baronet. Was she really as ready to fling his love from her when she was tired of evoking it as she had flattered she would be? Would the high spirit on which she prided herself enable her to look on without a pang if he transferred the allegiance she courted to another? Vivien had forgotten that while she revenged herself, others might be making ready to step in and catch the heart at the rebound which she was toying with so carelessly. But now these thoughts were forced upon her, they proved very difficult to chase away again.

"So my wishes are to be granted, after all?" Lord Esseyln exclaimed, when his sister joined him in the breakfast room on the morrow. "Hatherfield was with me an hour ago"—and he glanced at the clock, which pointed to the hour of noon—"and he tells me this."

"But here, Vivien, with an imperative figure, silenced him.

"I do not want to hear what he told you. There cannot be anything more absurd than full-grown men making sentimental avowals to each other."

"But, Viva, you must listen, while I tell you in what terms Hatherfield has proposed to you."

"Indeed, I know it already. He graciously condescends to lend an ear to your hints that you have a sister to dispose of, and the mothers of pretty daughters agree to take her off your hands. A little thought that you would ever be so eager to be rid of me. Why have you not said to me, 'Vivien, you are in my way; I want my house to myself; find yourself another home as soon as you can.' It might have sounded harsh, but it would have been more honorable than the course you have pursued."

"Now, what the deuce have I done to deserve such a wiggling?" she asked, manded Aymer, planting himself on the hearth-rug and thrusting his hands to the bottom of his pockets. "I certainly have wish to see you happily married, and I... once or twice told Hatherfield that it would please me very much to see you and be united; but that is long, long ago. You have both made such strenuous efforts to convince me that you hated each other, that even now I find it difficult to believe to the contrary."

"Then don't try, for I'm not sure but that our hate is only slumbering, and will soon break out anew."

"But Hatherfield told me he had reason to hope."

"As if the word 'reason' were not such a character in connection with such a silly affair!"

"But, Viva, do talk sense. Have you not agreed to marry Innis?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then what have you done?" asked Aymer, sternly. "Will be no party to the tricks of a heartless jilt. When you rejected the addresses of other men I did not complain much, because I did not want to see you throw yourself away on suitors who had so little to recommend them; but all the same I was vexed and grieved, for you did not behave well."

"The men were egregiously vain, and I am blamed for it," cried the young lady, with an air of injured innocence. "Not for that, but for encouraging them. I don't like to see women angling for admiration, Viva, and it makes me blush for my sister when she stoops to do it."

"Have you finished? Of what is this lecture apropos?" she asked, drily.

"You answer me this one question truthfully—do you love him?"

"I like him sometimes."

"Are you going to make the marquis propose? Am I not to be allowed the old-fashioned alternative of a 'numery'?" asked Vivien, leaning back in her chair and putting her quiver with such a taunting smile, that Aymer, who was far more deeply moved than she imagined, grew more irate than before.

"Vivien, you treat me as a boy because I am but a year or two younger; but take care. There are times when I feel the necessity of acting as the dead of our house, and your natural guardian. You shall neither make Hatherfield ridiculous, nor disgrace yourself by any more of the contemptible conduct I have just been rebuking. Once again I ask you, have you accepted the proposals of Sir Innis?"

"And once again I make reply, 'No'—no, most redoubtable earl, I have not. If he says I have, he is guilty of a wicked little fib for which I hope you will reprove him sharply. I don't see why all your fierce looks are to be bestowed on poor me!"

"Then you have not given Sir Innis a definite reply?"

"Oh, yes; but he is sadly obtuse; he would not take it."

"I will be the bearer of your decision."

"Thanks, but I'm not quite sure that I'm in the same mind that I was yesterday, or that I shall not think differently again by tomorrow. In fact, dear Aymer, I am so worried about my dress for the princess' ball that I cannot think of so much else. Mamma persists that tulle becomes me, and my glass tells me a different story."

Aymer stamped his foot in his anger at her gay indifference, although he suspected from the tremulous movement of her hands that it was half-assured.

"Vivien, I will be heard and answered seriously. Do you forget that the happiness of the best friend I have in the world is jeopardized by your frivolity?"

"I thought Sir Innis politely declined to accept your invitation and rid you of your troublesome sister. If I had a friend whom I worshipped so much, I should not scheme to burden him with a girl for whom my best epithet was 'frivolous.'"

"I'm quite ready to acknowledge that Innis has acted like an idiot in falling in love with a woman utterly incapable of estimating him at his true value; a woman whose greatest recommendation appears that he would be a puppet in her hands."

Vivien rose from her seat, her face as dark with anger as his own.

"Forgive me, Viva; I spoke rudely, and I am sorry for it; but you are trying my temper more than you seem to think. You know I have always been touchy on the subject of your treatment of Hatherfield, and I think you might be more forbearing, more womanly in your mode of listening to what I feel it my duty to say."

"If we are not to quarrel, would it not be prudent to lay the bill on the table for six months? When the winter season is over, and I am satiated with its gaieties, you will find me more amenable to reason."

"Not a day, not an hour, shall Innis be kept in suspense if I can prevent it," cried the vehement reply to this proposal. "Do you intend to reject him?"

"I do not know," was all that Vivien would say.

"Have you resolved to accept him?"

"To this she gave the same reply. "How long will it take to ascertain what you intend to do?"

"How can I tell? Pickle and frivolous creatures like myself—"

But here Aymer dashed in. "Must have a momentous question settled for them."

He said this so imperatively that Vivien began to breathe more quickly, and her blue eyes to glitter with rebellious light.

"Do you mean to say that you intend to marry me to Sir Innis whether I will or not?"

"Certainly not. The momentous question to which I referred to how long you must be permitted to trifle with him. I shall tell him from you that this day two months—your twentieth birthday, Viva—you will give him the reply he demands."

"As you please," she answered, carelessly. "You may also tell him if you like that my beloved mamma will forbid him the house if she discovers his intentions."

"Then Lady Esseyln will have to be told that this house is mine, and that I receive within it whatever guests I choose to invite."

And to prove how thoroughly he was in earnest, the young earl rang the bell and ordered the hall porter to be sent to him.

The man made his appearance just as Lady Esseyln came down accompanied by Cressida. The countess started at her stepson, whose unusually dignified air startled as much as it surprised her. The good-humored boy who had borne his inflections so cheerfully, was giving place to a man who knew his rights and would assert them, and half afraid to question him, she looked to Vivien for an explanation.

But the latter only shook her head and remained mute. A storm she had often dreaded, was now lowering in the distance, and might at any moment burst over her head. She had more reason to dread a serious rupture between the countess and Aymer than either of them imagined, and she sat outwardly tranquil and indifferent, but really suffering from an anxiety that almost deprived her of the power of speech.

CHAPTER XL

"Benson," said Lord Esseyln to the porter, in loud, firm tones, such as that functionary had never before heard him use, "remember that I am always at home to Sir Innis Hatherfield, and so are the ladies. Any want of respect shown to him will be resented, and I will, too, by me. Take care that my orders are not neglected."

"What is the meaning of this?" asked the countess, when the astonished man had retreated.

"You had better not inquire," Vivien rejoined, with a curl of her lip. "It is I who am the culprit, I am guilty of sundry acts of incivility to the lord of my lord here, and am threatened with condign punishment if I do not turn over a new leaf."

"Dear me! what have you been doing?" asked Cressida. "I'm sure I thought you were growing quite polite to Sir Innis."

"How very ridiculous it is to have this doughty baronet thrust upon us in this way," the countess exclaimed; but Aymer, instead of retorting and losing temper in the boyish fashion that had so often given the ladies of his household the advantage, picked up a newspaper, and slipped his coffee in silence.

[To be Continued.]

MIDDLESEX NEWS

Pretty Social Event at Union-Dorice Lodge, 289, A. F. and A. M. Komoka, Elects Officers.

Miss Birdie McDougall, of Shelbourne, is seriously ill.

Miss Emma Nicholas has taken the position of matron at the Institute at Muncey.

Mr. J. W. Howell, London, has been visiting her son, Cecil Howell, V.S., of Melbourne.

The matter of repealing the local option bylaw in Lobo will be voted on in January.

Davidson Micks, of Union, who has been very sick with appendicitis, is improving.

Rev. Mr. Shepherd preached in the Mount Brydges Methodist Church yesterday (Sunday).

Mr. William Forsythe, of Delaware, is home, after spending some few weeks with his sisters in the States.

Mr. Solomon Graham, of Napier, arrived home on Friday evening, after putting in about nine months sailing on the lakes.

Mr. Wm. Gardner, of Mesa, was stricken with paralysis on Tuesday, and his condition is critical.

This is the second stroke he has had in the past few months.

Smith & Gale, of Glenora, are rapidly completing the plastering of the new school at Melbourne, and the trustees hope to have everything in readiness for the new year.

Miss Eliza Willoughby and Mr. Jos. Luce, Delaware, were married at high noon on Thursday. The ceremony took place at the residence of Mr. James McKenzie, only the relatives being present.

At Sutherland's school house, a faradoc, an entertainment will be given on Tuesday evening, Dec. 27. A good programme, consisting of readings, recitations, singing, dialogues and drills, will be given. Rev. D. E. Martin, chairman.

A musical and literary entertainment, under the auspices of the Kerwood Methodist Sabbath school, will be held in the church on Wednesday, Dec. 28. Great pains will be taken to make the entertainment a success in every particular.

Candidates for municipal honors are beginning to crop up in Adelaide. It is understood a contest for reeve is probable between Mr. Ed. Henderson and Mr. Wm. Sullivan.

For councilors the names of James Early, James Adair, Thomas Patterson, Samuel Belton, Angus McCabe, Julius Shields and Samuel McLeod are mentioned.

Mr. Lewis Clark has resigned the position as teacher of the Melbourne school. Mr. Robertson, of Strathroy, it is understood, has been engaged in his place, at the same salary.

A regular meeting of Doric Lodge, No. 269, A. F. and A. M., Komoka, was held in their hall on Thursday. The following officers were elected: W. M., Bro. E. Shaw; S. W., Rev. Bro. Lindsay; J. W., Bro. H. McIntyre; F. S., Bro. P. S. Graham; chaplain, Rev. Bro. Holmes; treasurer, Bro. D. McDugan; S. D., Bro. E. Steel; L. B., Bro. G. Tuckey; I. G., Bro. G. Murch; O. G., Bro. J. Robinson.

The Komoka Methodist Sunday school entertainment took place on Thursday evening, and a grand programme was given by the children, which was a credit to the young ladies who took the pains to teach them.

Mr. Moyer was chairman, and the programme consisted of songs, marching songs, and drills, including five tableaux. The first was "Recess"; second, "Home, Sweet Home"; third, "Sleeping Silently"; fourth, "Rain, Hail, and Thunder"; fifth, "Rock of Ages." Then came Santa Claus, who gave the children candy, etc., off the tree. Receipts at the door, \$6.05.

Strathroy Herald: A pleasant event took place in McGillivray township on Dec. 21, being the marriage of Miss Maude, eldest daughter of the late Henry Miller, of that township, and niece of E. Hodgins, of the Windsor Hotel, of this city, to Joseph Shoebottom, a prosperous young farmer of London township. The nuptial ceremony, which took place at high noon at the bride's home, was performed by Rev. L. W. Diehl, rector of Allis Craig.

The bride was prettily attired in McKinley blue and wore the regulation veil and orange blossoms. She carried a handsome bouquet of cream roses. Miss Shoebottom, sister of the groom, was bridesmaid, and wore a delicate costume of blue cloth. The groom was supported by Horton Miller, the bride's brother. After the ceremony a wedding dinner was served, and the happy couple left for their future home in London township.

The guests were principally relatives of the contracting parties, among the number being Mr. and Mrs. E. Hodgins and family, of this city.

Mr. Harker, the postmaster of Delaware, also the Bible class teacher of the Memorial Methodist Church, gave his class of over 40 members an excellent supper recently. The members turned out in full force and spent a very enjoyable evening. After supper a very choice programme was rendered. Music was given by Mr. H. Knowles and wife

on string instruments. Mr. and Mrs. Harker, of Michigan, gave two grand selections in the way of songs, which were appreciated by all present. The speakers were Messrs. L. Vail, Glennie, Cook, Elsie Hearty, Boles, Williams and Rev. Mr. Moyer. Everybody was highly pleased with the very enjoyable evening and the spread of oysters. Mr. Finch, of Komoka, brother-in-law of the teacher, acted as chairman. The programme was closed with the singing of "God be with you till we meet again." Mr. Harker had his mother and sister, of Strathroy, also his brother and wife, from Michigan, present at the supper. The number partaking of supper was 50. The class which their teacher ever succeeds.

The Union Methodist Church was the scene of a pretty social event on Wednesday evening, when Miss Bertha Sutton was led to the altar by her brother Cecil, of North Yorkmouth, and married to Mr. Adam Fulton, jun., of Southwold. The bride looked extremely handsome, attired in white silk, satin trimmings, and pearl jets and lace, and carried a bouquet of roses; she also wore roses in her hair. Miss Mabel McIntyre assisted the bride, and carried a bouquet of carnations. Miss Gertie Mellor, Southwold, also assisted. Both young ladies wore white muslin suits, trimmed with blue satin, and looked very pretty. Mr. Hugh Sutton assisted the groom. Rev. Mr. Going tied the nuptial knot in his very able manner. Mr. Josiah Long presented the Bible, as this was the first wedding in the church.

A grand concert and Christmas tree, under the auspices of the Sunday school of St. George's Church, Thorncliffe, was held in Harding's Hall, on Thursday evening, Dec. 22. A splendid programme was carried out, consisting of songs by the school, recitations, tableaux, a candle drill by the little ones, and the flag drill by sixteen young ladies in costume. The rector, Rev. R. S. W. Howard, made an excellent chairman, and besides his address there were speeches by his brother, Rev. O. Howard, of Montreal, and Mr. M. Wright, superintendent of the Sunday school.

A pleasant feature of the evening was the presentation of a beautiful watch and chain to Miss M. Logan, organist of the church, from the members of the congregation. A visit from Santa Claus concluded the festivities, and everyone passed a pleasant evening.

How It Hurts! Rheumatism, with its sharp twinges, aches and pains. Do you know the cause? Acid in the blood has accumulated in your joints. The cure is found in Hood's Sarsaparilla, which neutralizes the acid. Thousands write that they have been completely cured of rheumatism by Hood's Sarsaparilla.

HOOD'S PILLS cure nausea, sick headache, biliousness, indigestion. Price, 25 cents.

We are always complaining that our days are few, and acting as though there would be no end of them.—Seneca.

Red Hot From the Gun. Was the ball that hit G. B. Steadman, of Newark, Mich., in the civil war. It caused horrible aches that no treatment helped for 20 years. Then Bucklen's Arnica Salve Cured him. Cures Cuts, Bruises, Boils, Felons, Corns, Skin Eruptions, Best Pile cure on earth. 25 cents a box. Cure guaranteed. Sold by all druggists.

A favorite mode of suicide among the African tribes who dwell near Lake Nyassa is for a native to wade into the lake and calmly wait for a crocodile to open its mouth and swallow him.

THERE is not a more dangerous class of disorders than those which affect the breathing organs. Nulity danger with Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil—a pulmonary acknowledged efficacy. It cures soreness and lameness when applied externally, as well as swelled neck and crick in the back; and, as an inward specific, possesses most substantial results.

The passion flower, which grows in the South American forests can only be enjoyed where it grows, as it fades almost as soon as it is picked.

LIFE SAVED.—Mr. James Bryson Cameron writes: "I was confined to my bed with inflammation of the lungs and was given up by physicians. A neighbor advised me to try Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil, stating that his wife had used it for a throat trouble with the best results. Acting on this advice, I procured the medicine, and less than half a bottle cured me. I certainly believe it saved my life. It was with reluctance that I consented to a trial, as I was reduced to such a state that I doubted the power of any remedy to do me good."

King Alfonso XIII, is still bracketed as Lord of Gibraltar, the country never having officially admitted that the stronghold has gone out of its possession.

Every household should have on hand a box of Dr. Chase's Ointment. The diversity of uses to which it can be put and the many doctors' bills it saves warrant its taking first place in the family medicine chest. All dealers sell and recommend it.

The great lung healer is found in that excellent medicine sold as Bickel's Anti-Consumptive Syrup. It soothes and diminishes the sensibility of the membrane of the throat and air passages, and is a sovereign remedy for all coughs, colds, hoarseness, pain or soreness of the chest, bronchitis, etc. Learn to say "No." It's better than "Nt."

Persicaria Plant Food helps your plants to sustain life during the winter months in the cramped house quarters. At your dealers.

DR. WOODS' NORWAY PINE SYRUP

Stops the irritating cough, loosens the phlegm, soothes the inflamed tissues of the lungs and bronchial tubes, and produces a quick and permanent cure in all cases of Coughs, Colds, Bronchitis, Asthma, Hoarseness, Sore Throat and the first stages of Consumption.

"I have used Norway Pine Syrup for coughs and colds of myself and baby. I always find it cures much quicker than anything I have ever tried." Mrs. R. F. Loxham, P. O. Box 25 and 50c. a bottle at all dealers.

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Single First Class Fare and One-Third, going Dec. 24 to 26, returning until Jan. 1, 1899.