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## THE HEIR OF Lancewood

### CHAPTER X.

"No," replied Sir Arthur, "that I certainly have not."

And Vivien was so delighted with the reply that she kissed him lovingly, as of old, before the young wife came between them.

"That does my very heart good, papa," she said. "I thought you had quite forgotten my mother."

"My dear Vivien," returned Sir Arthur, earnestly, "when you know more of life, you will know that a man never forgets and never ceases to love his first love." And Lady Neslie, overhearing the words, felt the bitterest hatred for the dead mother and the living child.

"I should like to see what the face was like that he thought so beautiful," she said. And that evening she called her maid to a solemn consultation.

"Marie," she said, "I want you to discover for me—first, whether there is a portrait of the late Lady Neslie; secondly, where it is. You can find out by a few well-directed questions in the servants' hall."

In twenty minutes' time, Marie returned to tell Miladi that there was a very beautiful picture of the late Lady Neslie, and that it hung in Miss Neslie's boudoir—it used to be in the Blue Room, but, when the pictures were removed from there, Miss Neslie insisted on having it taken to her apartments. Miladi laughed a mocking little laugh, and instantly made up her mind that, if it were possible to give Miss Neslie something disagreeable to think of, she would do so. She was jealous—jealous of the dead wife who had been so dearly loved, and whose child was heiress of that grand domain.

So, with a sharpened arrow in her heart, and a smile on her lips, she went into Vivien's room. It was so bland and smiling that it was hard to imagine she could be unkind.

"I ought to offer you a thousand

apologies, Vivien," she said. "I know that I am intruding, but I wanted to ask you if you would recommend me some really nice book to read."

Vivien was not pleased at the intrusion, but she was always polite. She answered kindly—

"I do not know what your taste in literature is—I have not seen you read many books. Try one of Dickens'."

"I will. What a pleasant room this boudoir of yours is! You have a beautiful view from the window. How fond you are of flowers! Your room is full of them."

"Yes; I love flowers," assented Vivien.

Then Lady Neslie went to the door, as though about to leave; she looked round the walls.

"You have some nice pictures. Dear me, what a strange face that is! Is it a portrait?"

She was looking at the pictured face of Vivien's mother. Vivien made no answer. Lady Neslie walked up to it.

"It is a strange face," she said, as though studying it. "I do not like it; the expression is disagreeable, sullen and proud—the eyes want intelligence. I should not keep such a picture in my room. Is this one of your boasted Neslies, Vivien?"

Vivien had grown white even to the very lips; her anger was so great that she was literally speechless. Lady Neslie looked at her.

"Have I annoyed you?" she said, quickly. "I am sorry. Surely this is not the portrait of any one you care for? If so, I am very sorry. I would not have spoken of it had I known."

Vivien's anger was terrible.

"Lady Neslie," she said, slowly, "that is my mother's picture."

"Your mother's!" exclaimed Valerie. "How sorry I am! Why did you not stop me? How could I know? I always understood she was a beautiful woman."

"That is my mother's portrait," repeated Vivien, "and you know it. You are very clever, Lady Neslie, but you are not clever enough to deceive me. From some motive of your own you have come here purposely to insult me through my dead mother; you have achieved your purpose. Will you oblige me now by leaving me?"

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Lady Neslie turned scarlet with shame at having been detected.

"I assure you—" she began.

"Hush!" said Vivien, calmly. "There is no need for further words. That is my beloved mother's picture—and she was as worthy of honor and esteem as you are of contempt."

But Lady Neslie had recovered herself by this time. She laughed.

"What an absurd mistake! I am really sorry. I must tell Sir Arthur. But it is foolish of you to be cross about it, Vivien."

She found that she was talking to the air—Miss Neslie had left the room.

"Never mind," said her ladyship to herself. "I have hurt her; but the victory is not a great one, after all."

That little incident simply deepened Vivien's contempt for her father's wife, while it increased in some vague way Lady Neslie's awe of her.

There had been a slight disagreement over the jewels that Vivien's mother had worn. At her mother's death they were all locked away; but it was the right and privilege of the reigning Lady Neslie to wear them, and Valerie was not one to forego her privileges. Sir Arthur had spoken to her about the jewels, and she was all anxiety to see them. It happened that more than once Sir Arthur had also spoken to his daughter of them.

"They are family heirlooms," he had said. "As I have no wife to wear them, you must wear them, Vivien, when you come of age."

That promise he could not keep. Lady Neslie mentioned them when she had been some days at Lancewood.

"I should like to see them, Arthur," she said. "Perhaps some of the settings are old-fashioned. If so, the stones must be reset."

And one morning, when a sudden shower of rain prevented their going out, Sir Arthur asked his wife and daughter to join him in the library, where the cases were all arranged for inspection. They had never been touched since the dead Lady Neslie had closed them, and Sir Arthur remembered that, looked gravely at them. Vivien felt it deeply.

"Papa," she said, "I can be of no use here. Why did you send for me?"

"I thought you would assist Valerie in selecting what should be reset—you have so much taste in such things."

"I can suggest nothing," said Vivien. "They were my mother's jewels. If I were consulted, I should say keep them for her sake just as they are."

"Perhaps you are right," said Sir Arthur; but Lady Neslie cried, abruptly—

"No. I cannot wear them as they are. They would not suit me. I should like these pearls arranged as flowers, and this huge, old-fashioned diamond comb made into a pretty tiara. They will not do for me at all as they are."

"Well, you shall please yourself, Valerie," said her husband. "They are yours to wear during your life-

time. Vivien is there anything amongst them that you would like?"

The girl's proud eyes were dim with tears. It was inexpressibly painful to her to see what had been her mother's taken possession of after this fashion. She took up a pretty little pearl pendant.

"The last time I saw my mother she wore this. I should like it, papa. I remember taking hold of it, and she told me to mind that I did not injure the stones. I should like this."

Lady Neslie, looking up, saw the softened expression on her husband's face.

"Every time he sees that on his daughter's neck he will think of her mother," she said to herself; and she gained a quick unreasonable jealousy of the dead came over her.

"You will spoil the set if you take that," she said, quickly.

Vivien laid the pendant down.

"I will not take anything, papa," he said, quietly, and fearful of betraying how keenly she was hurt, he quitted the room.

Sir Arthur's face clouded over.

"That was not very good-natured, little wife," he said; and she laid her hand coaxingly on his shoulder.

"Wait until you hear why I did it, dear. You do not know what a tender-hearted, earnest girl your daughter is. If she had taken that pendant, every time she wore it she would be thinking about the mother she has lost, and would have been miserable;

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believe me, I did it from kindness. I knew she might not understand it—but I thought you would, Arthur, let us have a beautiful pendant made for her—she will be pleased."

"My dear, generous wife," said the easily-persuaded baronet. "I hardly gave you credit for so much consideration. We will send the order to London at once."

Some weeks afterward a beautiful pearl necklace and pendant arrived for Vivien—but she never wore either.

CHAPTER XI.

Though there were all the elements of strife in the household at Lancewood, yet all was perfect calm. People might surmise what they would—they knew nothing for certain; insensibly they ranged themselves on either side—they became partisans either of Lady Neslie or of the heiress of Lancewood—but outwardly all was calm and gay.

Only one person saw beneath the surface, and that was Gerald Dorman. Sir Arthur's marriage had considerably increased his labors. Before that Sir Arthur would at times answer a letter, audit his accounts, give audience to his tenants; now he did none of these things—they all fell upon the secretary. Sir Arthur was too deeply engrossed with his wife. He had to attend to her whims and caprices, and to escort her during her visits; he had not been so busily occupied for years. Yet, though his work was incessant, Gerald found time to watch the course of events.

He soon grew to dislike the new mistress of Lancewood; beneath all her seeming carelessness and light-hearted gaiety he saw malice and jealousy. Every slight, every trifling insult, offered to Vivien made his blood boil. He had kept his word—without ever intruding, he had been her most faithful friend. In a thousand ways that no one save himself understood he shielded her. He was careful to show her the greatest deference and respect—more, if possible, during this time of her downfall than he had shown her in prosperity. He always spoke of her and to her as though she were still mistress of the Abbey. Whenever she was not present, and he could make an opportunity, he spoke of her as heiress of Lancewood.

For the secret of this man's life was that he loved Vivien Neslie with the whole force of his heart and soul—loved her silently, desperately, hopelessly. He never dreamed of any return, he was content to lavish his adoration on her, to pour out the love of his soul at her feet. He had never dared to raise his eyes with love to her face. He worshipped her as pagans do the far-off bright stars. He was one of those who delude themselves: He never said to himself that he had talents, and that he could work until, by his success, he should win her. He raised for himself no such false hopes, he dreamed no foolish dreams, he never imagined that he should win her; but his love was so great that he was content to give all and look for nothing in return. It was the very madness of love—it was too great, too entire, to have any alloy of selfishness. If the fair proud young heiress had bidden him lay himself at her feet, that she might trample on him, he would have done so; had she bidden him give her his life, he would have laid it down with a smile on his face. He gave her all—he asked nothing; he was content to live in her presence as flowers live in the sun. He asked for nothing but permission to serve her, to live and die for her. He was content if from time to time she gave him a smile, a kind word, or even a kind look—if she allowed him to do something for her that required both time and skill.

It was not a presumptuous love, for he had never dared to touch even the hem of her dress. Once, in giving her a book, his hand touched hers, and it seemed to him that even that slight touch drove him almost mad. Her beautiful face often bent over the same page with his own, her hair brushed his cheek; he trembled then like a man seized with ague. She raised her dark, proud eyes to him once.

"Are you ill, Mr. Dorman?" she asked.

He answered "Yes," and with unsteady steps he left the room.

(To be Continued.)

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