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LOVE AND A TITLE

At the long list of names, in place of the simple Vernon Vane, every one looked up, excepting Jeanne, and there was a slight rustle of surprise; but Vane's face was calm and composed, and Jeanne's turn came to make the usual assertion. Only for a moment did she pause as he held out his hand, and at that moment she looked up at him, a look which he remembered ever afterward, a glance at once appealing and confiding, a glance which he could not understand then, but which, in the momentous after-time, he credited with a mistaken significance.

She did not look up again, not even when, with the usual blundering, he slipped the wedding ring on the wrong finger.

It was a trifling mistake, and not an uncommon one, but Mrs. Lambton smiled, and Maud and Georgina smiled.

With a little blush Jeanne held out her hand and Vane transferred the ring to the right finger.

The little accident took only a moment or so in the transaction, but it upset Mr. Bell, and the rest of the service was almost inaudible.

Then, with her hand on her husband's arm, Jeanne retraced her steps to the vestry. Vestries as a rule are never far from the scene of a catastrophe, and without imminent peril to that domestic animal, and when he came in, and seemed to make his way to the table for the little group of sitters and lookers.

But when he did, he held out his hand timidly to Jeanne, and dropped his.

"I hope you'll be happy, Jeanne," he stammered, and with an amount of daring which astonished him for the moment, he raised her hand and kissed it.

Jeanne blushed, but she smiled as Vane put his arm around her, drew her toward him, and kissed her.

"This, of course, was the signal for the rest of them, and Jeanne's husband and her were engaged, and so on.

"It's rather odd being married for the first time," said Hal, in a stage whisper, to Mrs. Bell, who turned to him.

"Will you sign the register?" he said. Vane made his way up to the table and signed, and Jeanne followed. The register was closed.

"I say, Vane," said Hal, "what a lot of names you've got. Liberal kind of people your godfathers and godmothers must have been."

"Some of them are purely ornamental," Hal said. "Are you really?"

There was a general move toward the door, Jeanne, on Vane's arm, leading the way.

Then the group of children, who had been impatiently waiting, threw down a shower of flowers, and upon these Jeanne, with a sudden tremulous smile, stepped into the carriage. The other carriages followed, and in a few minutes, Hal, who was full of his novel dignity, had arranged the guests around the table, and the wedding broke up.

Georgina and Maud had cried their tears by this time, and were radiant with smiles as they saw Vane and Jeanne, and arranged her veil, Uncle John and Mr. Lambton looking on approvingly. The latter gentleman was in great form that morning, and looked, in his new blue coat and brass buttons, as if he had never been laid up in his life.

It was quite a treat to see him bustling about the room, to the imminent danger of the elaborately laid tablecloth, and making his old English-gentleman laugh among the glasses. Bustling about, he made his way up to Vane and in a bluff and properly-sounding tone, exclaimed, as he shook him by the hand:

"By jove, sir, you're a lucky dog! You ought to be a happy man. You've got a treasure, sir, a perfect treasure. And I say, look here, he added, drawing Vane a little aside by a buttonhole, and speaking so that every one in the room could hear, "if you ever want a friend, don't forget the old fellow. I don't say I can find room for a picture or two—half a dozen of 'em—up in the Park. And good prices for 'em, too. Dang it, I like to encourage 'art! and give a 'elping hand to struggling 'genius. When you want a friend, don't forget me, Mr. Vane. I can't say more, eh, can I?"

"No, indeed," said Vane, shaking hands; "and I am very much obliged to you."

"And as for Jeanne—Mrs. Vane, eh?" he corrected himself, with a chuckle, and a sly dig at the side of Vane's frock coat, "why, I look upon her as one of my own dainties, always have, by George, I wish you joy, and with a benevolent old English-gentleman chuckle, Mr. Lambton sank into his chair, delighted with himself, and in consequence, everybody else.

"Mark my words," whispered Hal to Vane, "the old man is going to make a speech. I can see it in his face. You won't cry will you, Vane?"

Vane laughed and pushed the boy into his seat.

"You've got to make a speech yourself, Hal," he said, at which Hal trembled visibly.

Crying is an exhausting operation, and the two bridesmaids, much abetted and encouraged by Hal, attacked the usual trinkets with surprising heartiness, considering their heart-broken condition; mingled with the clatter of the knives and forks, there was a great deal of laughter and talking, and two persons on the whole, seemed to be smiling as the wedding was drawn to a close.

Vane was busy attending to the

of Mrs. Lambton, who sat on the other side of him, and did not notice the fixed attention with which Bell regarded him—an attention so fixed that Hal had almost to shout in asking him for the third time to leave the champagne.

To Jeanne, the whole scene seemed like the unsubstantial episode in a dream and every now and then she caught herself glancing up at the handsome face beside her, as if to assure herself that her lover, her husband, was there. Every now and then, too, Vane's hand would seek and hold hers for a moment beneath the table; and once, as he bent down, he whispered: "My Jeanne!" and Jeanne's heart leaped gladly.

Never had Vane—the once silent and reserved—appeared in such light spirits and buoyant happiness.

"Isn't he quite too charming?" whispered Maud to Bell; "so distinguished-looking. No one would think he was only an artist, would they?"

At which poor Bell, who had been staring absent-mindedly at the bride, started and turned pale.

Presently Vane glanced at his watch, and Hal, who had dozed his shyness in champagne, jumped to his feet.

"Bless the boy," murmured Aunt Jane. "He's going to make a speech."

"Only a short one, aunt," said Hal. "I've got to propose the health of the bride, you know," and he nodded toward Jeanne with a flush on his bright face, and a suspicious moisture in his eyes.

"Here is my love, Jen, and may you be happy."

"That's the most sensible speech I ever heard at a wedding breakfast," said Aunt Jane, edifyingly.

Vane got up with a smile on his lips. "Thank you, Hal," he said. "Jeanne shall be happy, if I can make her so."

"Mr. Bell will have to propose the bridesmaid's health," said Hal, clapping his tutor on the back. "Come, sir."

Bell started and looked around, then across and fidgeted with the tablecloth. He was very pale, and strangely nervous, as if a rule his humility deserted him when he had to open his mouth, and there was a silence which Mr. Lambton broke by requesting all to fill their glasses.

Bell looked around once or twice, then with a shake of his head, sat down. There was an awkward pause, but Mr. Lambton was equal to the occasion, and, clasping his throat, looked around with a placid countenance.

But Mr. Lambton's speech—a speech which had taken him three whole days to prepare—was doomed to remain unspoken, for as suddenly as he had sat down, he rose to his feet again.

"Mr. Vane," he said, "will you step outside with me for a moment?"

Vane, who was saying something to Jeanne in a low voice, looked up with a curious smile.

"What is it, Bell?" he said. "Can't you say it here?"

"If you wish it," replied poor Bell, amidst a complete silence, and taking from his pocket the marriage license, he tossed it with a shaking finger.

A slight shadow of annoyance crossed Vane's face, but was instantly replaced with the grave, composed smile.

"I see," he said. "Well, say on."

Bell turned to Aunt Jane, who sat staring, thinking that either the pie or the champagne had flown to his head.

"Mrs. Dostrell," he said, with agitation, "I can't let this go any further; I don't think it is fair—with all deference to his lordship—I can't, as a clergyman, consent to keep this secret any longer. I think it ought to be known."

Aunt Jane turned pale. All eyes were fixed upon the speaker, except Vane's, and his rested upon Jeanne's suddenly pale face with intent and watchful regard.

In the confusion, Bell's "his lordship" had passed unnoticed, but suddenly he looked over at Vane, and addressing him said:

"My lord, have I your consent?"

There was a quick murmur of astonishment, and Vane inclined his head.

Poor Bell wiped his forehead.

"It is very painful to me to have to make this statement," he said, "and I cannot understand why it should have been considered necessary to maintain such secrecy. Perhaps—perhaps—"

he broke off, with a sudden hope as he turned from one to the other, "his lordship has told you all?"

"His lordship—what lordship?" demanded Mr. Lambton, staring from one to the other. "Who the—who do you mean, sir?"

"I allude to Vane, there," said Bell, catching up the license, in despair. "You may read it all for yourselves, and learn as I did, the real identity of—this gentleman."

"Do you mean Vane?" Mr. Bell asked Hal. "What do you mean? We all know who you are. Who do you think he is?"

Bell laid his hand on the boy's shoulder, but looked at Jeanne anxiously.

"In this license, the person whom you—whom all of us have known as Vernon Vane, the artist, is called the Marquis of Ferndale!" he said, gravely.

CHAPTER XXV.

There was an intense silence. Aunt Jane stared speechlessly. Uncle John arose and held on by the table, but Mr. Vane's surprise was more marked.

He turned pale, and his eyes were fixed upon the speaker, as if he were staring at a phenomenon.

van bless my soul, it—it can't be true!" Bell waved his hand and pointed to the license.

All eyes were turned to Vane, who, calm and composed, with a grave smile upon his handsome face, and with his hand still holding Jeanne's, looked up.

"You have sprung a mine upon us all, Bell," he said, with a slight tone of reproach; then he turned to Aunt Jane, and said, quietly:

"What Mr. Bell has said is true, Mrs. Dostrell. Will you forgive me for concealing my real identity from you? It was done with no unworthy motive, and I trust you will not regret your gift to me to-day because I asked for it in a feigned name—scarcely feigned, though."

He added, gently, "for Vernon Vane are two of my names, as Bell will tell you."

Still, however, no one seemed able to do more than stare, and Vane, with a short laugh, continued:

"Do not look so aghast, all of you," he said, with a touch of kindly impatience. "I am not changed by having a few extra names and a title. Pray let me remain Vernon Vane, and let us remain on the old footing. The reason for this concealment, Uncle John, I will write and tell you, or, better still, Jeanne shall do it. Now, Mr. Lambton, let us take a glass of champagne together," and, with a laugh, he filled Mr. Lambton's glass; but the worthy pillarer could not be put at his ease quite so quickly.

"Cer—certainly, my lord, with pleasure," he said. "Delighted, I'm sure—bless my soul!—my lady, your ladyship's very good health," he gasped, looking at Jeanne, not with the old, patronizing smile, but with a reverential, almost frightened, expression.

"Now, Aunt Jane," said Vane, "fill up your glass, come—"

But Aunt Jane shook her head and stared at him.

"Well," he said, giving it up as a bad job; "I see you want to have a chat with Jeanne. Suppose you ladies run away and leave us gentlemen to have a quiet glass to ourselves? Go, my darling," he murmured in Jeanne's ear, "and don't forget that we have only just half an hour."

Certainly the effect of Bell's communication seemed to have caused partial stupefaction to the majority of the party, for when Vane opened the door, Georgina and Maud arose as if they were awaking from a stupor, and each, as they went out, stared over their shoulders at him, as if they could not see too much of him.

Jeanne was the last to leave the room, and, as she went, Vane took both her hands in his, and scrutinized her downcast face with a loving, assured expression.

"Well, Jeanne," he said, "are you so startled also?"

But Jeanne did not answer, did not lift her eyes, and went out without a word, bearing as she did so, Vane's voice, which was now merry ring in his saying:

"Never, gentlemen, don't let us be foolish over this little surprise. Bell, I haven't committed a crime! Come, Uncle John, Jeanne hasn't suffered any injury. Come—come—"

Jeanne finds the rest of the ladies clustered at the foot of the stairs, all waiting for her, and all speechless, and putting her arm around Aunt Jane's waist, she leads her upstairs, the rest following like sheep; then, when the door is closed, Aunt Jane speaks:

"Jeanne, is this true?"

"Oh, yes, it is true—it is quite true," echoed Maud and Georgina. "It can't be true!"

"Yes, it is true," said Jeanne, quietly, with downcast face.

Mrs. Lambton, sank into a chair, and hid her hand to her heart.

"Then—then," she said, "you are a marquisess, Jeanne?"

"A marquisess," echoed Maud, casting a woe-filled and despairing glance at her sister.

If they had only known—if some good-natured angel had only whispered that this handsome unknown man they had been patronizing so effusively all these months past was a marquis, instead of a poor struggling artist, what might have happened? They both exchanged glances and groaned.

"A real marquis," gasped Mrs. Lambton; "and here's Lambton and me been treating him all this time like a common man!"

"And pa," groaned Maud, wringing her hands, "and pa talking to him about pictures and being his friend, in that horrid, awful way, only a few minutes ago. Oh, me, I shall die with shame and vexation."

"So shall I, I'm sure," moaned Georgina, "and to think we made so much of that trumpety Mr. Fitzsimmons—though he is a viscount."

"What's a viscount to a marquis—a real marquis!" said Mrs. Lambton. "And Maud, Georgina—how can you sit there and let her ladyship stand?" she cried.

The two girls jumped as if their chairs had suddenly bitten them, and each dragged a chair toward Jeanne, who stood with folded hands, and downcast face in all her bridal trim.

"Here's a chair, Jeanne—my lady!" said both in a voice.

Jeanne started and looked around—the title was so strange and improbable.

"Oh, don't," she cried reproachfully. "Why do you all look at me so, and—stand away from me? Have I done anything wrong? Don't look at me so, Aunt Jane."

And with the first tears she had shed on her marriage day, Jeanne threw herself at Aunt Jane's feet.

"There—there," said the old lady, waking from her trance, and crying, too. "Don't Jeanne—don't. There's nothing to be sorry about, though you have frightened the heart out of our bodies. Let me look at you, child."

And she took Jeanne's face in her hands.

"Yes, it is my Jeanne still, though she is a marquisess. But why did you keep it so secret?"

"I—I did not know it," she said, then faltered.

"Lord! anyone could see it isn't. For fault—her ladyship's fault, I mean," says Mrs. Lambton, "she was quite as surprised as any of us, weren't you, George?"

"My lady, I mean! And to think that there's a real marquis down stairs, waiting to carry her off. Oh, dear my poor head, and Lambton will be so sorry with us all. I'll never forgive myself for making so free and easy with a marquis."

"And the Marquis of Ferndale, too!" murmured Maud, in an awed whisper—for she had heard some stories of his power and greatness of the Marquis of Ferndale. Oh, Jeanne, what a lucky girl you are!"

Jeanne started and looked at them with a sudden flush, and the old ladies, in their excitement, were not aware of it.

"Lucky," she said; "yes, I am lucky, because I am happy—because he loves me—not because he is a marquis. Why do you look so, and talk so strangely?" she said, standing in the middle of the room, with questioning eyes and parted lips, as if she were waiting for being a marchioness? What difference does it make? Do you think I care? No, I wish—yes, I wish that he was only Vernon Vane."

And the tears sprang to her eyes.

"My dear Jeanne," muttered Maud, reproachfully, "it—it sounds wicked. To wish yourself plain Mrs. Vane, instead of a marchioness. Oh, ma."

"Jeanne is quite right," said Aunt Jane drying her eyes. "I know what she means. Don't cry, Jeanne. It will all come right. It is plain that Vane loves you, or why should he have done this? But—but I'm all dazed, and all your boxes are labeled 'Mrs. Vernon Vane,' too."

"And that's all marked 'J. Vane,' said Mrs. Lambton, with a despairing sigh. "What shall we do?"

Before this momentous problem received solution there came a hammering at the door, and shouts of:

"Jeanne! Jeanne! Jeanne!"

Jeanne flies to the door. At least there is one who will not "my lady" her and stand aloof.

"Hal!" she cries, and the next moment she is in her lace and satin. "Oh, Hal!"

"All right, Jeanne!" he says, brightly. "Don't cry, Jen! It's all right. We're a bit knocked over at first, of course, and you're upset; but Vane's none the less a real marquis, you know. Vane's a brick—a regular brick."

"Hal," cries Jeanne, holding him from her and kissing him vigorously; "I love you! Tell them that again!"

(To be continued.)

BABY'S OWN TABLETS

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Baby's Own Tablets is the best medicine in the world for little ones. They speedily relieve, promptly cure and give sound refreshing sleep. And they are guaranteed free from opiates and harmful drugs. They always do good—they cannot possibly do harm, and no home should be without the Tablets, especially during hot weather months, when dangerous troubles are so easily and almost unperceived. Mrs. Adam Martineau, Chelmsford, Que., says: "I have used Baby's Own Tablets for diarrhoea and stomach troubles and always with the most perfect success. They are better than any other medicine I know of." Sold by all druggists.

By mail at 25 cents a box by writing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont. See that every box bears the name "Baby's Own Tablets" and the picture of a four-leaf clover on the wrapper. Anything else is an imitation.

Animal Homes for the Aged.

The Hindus, notably thoughtful of animals, have established a rest home for decrepit beasts not far from Calcutta.

A high salaried manager rules a staff of eighty servants, while there is a house veterinary surgeon to look after those patients suffering from disease.

Every sanitary precaution is taken and the stables are models of their kind.

A recent census showed that there were 973 pauper inmates, including 129 bulls, 307 cows, 171 calves, 72 horses, 13 water buffalo, 69 sheep, 15 goats, 141 pigeons, 44 chickens, 4 cats, 3 monkeys, and 5 dogs.

Little red tape is required to secure admission to the home, and the cattle have an especially easy time since at certain seasons they are made the objects of veneration and are visited from far and near.

The institution is supported entirely by gifts from the natives, and after an existence of thirteen years it is in a thriving condition, with funds ample to meet any demands made upon it.

Newest Bible.

The latest version of the Bible is one just completed by Samuel Lloyd, of the British Bible Society. For years he has worked upon a version of the New Testament in the modern tongue, and after laborious comparisons with the latest Greek and Latin he has at last put forward a New Testament in which the obscure phrases have been made clear and words to which another meaning is now assigned are given their new form.

As an instance of the manner in which the work has been done, the word "publican" may be taken. By common usage a "publican" is now the keeper of a public house, or, in other words, a saloon keeper. In the Biblical sense a publican was a collector, and the latter word is now used. It is the most radical change of the text of the Scriptures that has ever been made, but the version has the approval of the clergy, who declare it to be a decided advance over the modernized form of the King James version.

South Pole is Warming.

Since the first visit to the ice cap of the south pole was made, some fifty years ago, there has been a steady recession of the belt of some thirty miles, and it is argued that in the course of time it will be possible to make approach to the pole itself and that the land in that vicinity may even become inhabited.

It is now believed that the ice cap is but the remains of the glacial period, and that when the ice shall finally have melted it will not form again, the waters then being subject to only such ice formations as occur in any sea in winter weather.

It is therefore possible that in spite of the few attempts made to reach the south pole in comparison with the many endeavors made to reach the north pole, the former will be the sooner discovered. There is believed to be plenty of land about the south pole, and in the course of time this may become the ruling country.

Going Home From Church.

Respectable Deacon—I wish that young Canon Mayberry weren't obliged to preach to such a small congregation.

Frivolous Widow—So do I. Every time he preaches I feel as if I had received a proposal.

The Disturbing Vision.

The carriage drew up at the door of the little school house and she alighted with a swish of silken skirts and a waiting odor of some subtle perfume, a vision to note and to remember.

"You can go down and leave this note at the rectory, Fiske," she observed to the smart young groom in attendance.

"And be here to take me up in about half an hour. Then she opened the school door without knocking and walked in. Had she not the right to do so? Had not her father built and endowed the building? Did it not depend for its very existence upon his bounty? She did not think of this, however, as she swept across the threshold and presented herself, a radiant vision, to the delighted gaze of the scholars. For they all loved her, and her entrance was a welcome break on a sultry July afternoon when lessons had become a drag.

Behind the desk the little schoolmistress smiled, too, for she was tired, and so, too, loved the bright girl who so often called her friends, albeit the gulf between them was marked enough. As they stood side by side the difference between them seemed very wide. The little schoolmistress was no longer young, a few gray threads were visible at her temples, and a meagre, unsatisfying life, albeit, lived patiently and always bravely, had laid some few lines on her broad, thoughtful brow.

"Let them out, Rhoda," said the vision imperiously. "I want to talk to you."

A wave of the hand was sufficient, and they trooped delightedly into the parlor, where Cecily, with her parasol poked the windows open to their widest limits.

"Ugh, how close and stuffy it is! And quite true you had your holiday, Rhoda. You are as pale as a ghost."

"The heat is trying," she explained, in her quiet, pleasant way. It really was so. The mental condition is always dependent on the physical one.

"Is it? I hardly think so. Take me, for instance, I am perfectly well. I have ridden twenty miles on the moors this morning, and I am never tired, but at the present moment I am pretty miserable. I can tell you."

"What is wrong, dear?"

"Everything," she leaned her arms on the desk, and looked across into the face of the little schoolmistress.

"Did you know that Mr. Clephane was dining with us last night?"

"The schoolmistress shook her head. "I have not seen him, and even if I had, he need not be mentioned."

"Papa likes him so much, he will keep on asking him, Rhoda; he says he is a scholar and a gentleman and that he has no idea a Dissenter could be so—so cultivated."

"The lip of the little schoolmistress faintly curled, but the young beauty, absorbed by her own thought, did not notice it.

"He will keep on asking him, Rhoda, then what will become of me?"

"Oh, yes, you do; you understand quite well; only you wish to make me speak out quite plainly. I have never met anyone like him. Why has Heaven been so cruel? He might just as easily have been rector of Donnington, or a Canon at Norwich, instead of pastor, as they call it, of that horrible (in Bethel in Rockbridge, I never pass it without a shudder."

"I don't think Mr. Clephane is ashamed of his work, or his tin Bethel," observed the little schoolmistress, a trifle dryly.

"He isn't," he glories in it, positively glories in it, and speaks about all these impossible factory people as if they were his dearest friends. It is because he is so different from every other man that I want to know him better, Rhoda, and yet—yet it is not wise."

"We have met quite a lot of times lately," she went on, presently. "And, somehow, I can't help thinking it is his will and wish. He is so strong, Rhoda, when he looks at me I feel like clay in the hand of the potter. This morning when I was riding I met him on the High Moor, and we talked for one long hour."

"What of?" asked the little schoolmistress, dully.

"All sorts of things, a good deal about religion. His religion is like yours, a thing I cannot understand. It simply guides his life. I went home feeling that my heart and my music, and my flocks, and all the things I have loved most, were so many hindrances to my full growth—these are his words, Rhoda."