

# THE FAIR IMPOSTOR.

CHAPTER XIV.  
Great Acting and Dangerous.  
(Continued.)

**B**UT she could not so efface herself. There was to be no rest for her yet a while, no moment in which to realize her position, or to gather up her strength.

Already they were eagerly inquiring for her in the great drawing room, to which they had gone, and when she said something in a low, uncertain voice, about going home without joining the general party, Gerald, who waited for her in the green room, looked so bitterly cast down, although he smiled up at her, that she had not the heart to disappoint him.

Still dressed in her satin and pearls, she put her hand on his arm, and rather leading him than being led, entered the drawing room. Her face, free from its faint touch of rouge and powder, stood revealed in all its exquisite olive clearness, pale, but not pallid, and adding, by its creamy softness, a deep luster to the dark eyes.

She was surrounded instantly, but the duchess rescued her; laying her hand upon the white shoulder, the kind-hearted woman drew Lillian toward her.

'My dear,' she said, simply, 'you have surprised us all! Where did you learn to act as you have done? You have made us all cry! And as for you, Gerald, you have covered yourself with laurels.'

Then she drew Lillian's arm within hers, and, skillfully disentangling her



from the throng, led her to Sir Talbot, who was eagerly awaiting her.

'Well, Lillian,' he said, looking up with a smile and an effort at composure, 'are you tired?' and then he took her hand and drew her down on a chair beside him, and, holding her hand, looked round.

It was a touching sight. It was so eloquent, the patrician face, with its wealth of pride and love beaming from the haughty eyes.

For a moment a thrill ran through Lillian Woodleigh's frame, a thrill of love, and pride, as deep as his own; then suddenly, with a pang like a dagger stab, she remembered! She was a traitor, sworn to betray—an impostor, vowed to imposition; usurping another's place in that trusting, loving heart!

With a spasm of agony, she leaned back, and drew her hand from his. The old man looked up, anxiously, pleadingly.

'Forgive me—bear with me, dear,' he said, in a whisper, 'I am so proud of my darling that I must show it. My child! my child!'

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spirations, acted as scenshifter and general property man.

As he entered, Lillian felt a sense of relief and protection. It was as if one, struggling and drowning in a whirlpool, should see the strong, hard-chested swimmer coming to pluck him from the angry, threatening waters.

With his firm, commanding step, he came across the room and stood beside them.

'The carriage, Harold,' said Sir Talbot. 'Lillian wishes to go.'

Harold was going without a word, but paused as the duchess pleaded for a little longer.

'You won't go until Mr. Slade comes down,' she said. 'He will be down directly.'

Sir Talbot looked at Lillian hesitatingly.

'Yes, yes,' he said; 'the gentleman who played Romeo so admirably, and to whom we owe so much. Will you stay, Lillian?'

She looked up, with a shadow of reluctance on her face, and met Harold's eyes full upon her.

He waited a moment; then, turning from her, said, slowly and distinctly, to the duchess: 'Mr. Slade has retired for the night.'

The duchess raised her eyelids, as if well pleased.

'Yes, poor Slade,' put in Gerald. 'He has been travelling all day, and the accident, aunt. He begged to be excused. It was very good of him to play for us.'

The duchess smiled. 'Very kind, but he might have extended his generosity. Never mind.' 'No, no,' said Sir Talbot. 'Perhaps Mr. Slade will honor us by dropping in at the Hall. I want to thank him.'

'He shall come!' said Gerald, confidently, and leaning on Harold's arm he went with them to the carriage.

With a smothered sigh of relief, Lillian sank back among the cushions. 'I'll ride outside,' said Harold, and the carriage started.

Sir Talbot sat in his corner, watching the silent figure with that never-to-be-satisfied gaze of affection, and seemed almost afraid lest his very breathing should disturb her; but as the carriage stopped at the lodge gates, he took up a light shawl which lay on the seat.

'It is rather chilly, darling; let me wrap this round you.'

She started and leaned forward. As she did so, looking absently out of the window, she saw a tall figure standing under the elms, one hand thrust in his bosom; it was Dawson Slade, just as he had stood that night when he had poured out his passionate confession of love.

With a low cry, she grasped Sir Talbot's arm, and sprang back. 'Lillian! What is it, my darling?' he exclaimed. 'What was it frightened you?'

She laughed, a little, tremulous laugh. 'Nothing—nothing!' she said. 'I think I am a little nervous and excited. I shall be quite myself again when we get home.'

'Yes, yes,' said Sir Talbot, soothingly. 'Lean against me, my darling! You are tired and overwrought. It has been too much—too much! We shall soon be home.'

'Home!' A shudder ran through her. 'How long would it be home for her?'

'Why do you shudder, dear? Are you cold?'

'Yes—cold,' she unconsciously gasped, aloud. 'My heart feels as if a band of iron had grasped it! Yes, we shall soon be—home!'

At last she was alone in her own room. With a word she had dismissed her maid. At her feet, in a glittering, shimmering heap, lay the costly bejeweled dress; around her were the innumerable evidences of wealth, the rich hangings and priceless articles of vertu; she shut out the sight of them with her white, quivering hands. The luxury and splendor seemed to mock her.

'This is not yours,' it seemed to say, 'impostor! usurper!'

With a long-drawn sob, she sank on to her knees and hid her face, the long wealth of silken hair falling round her like a veil.

So she remained, the storm raging within her, while the golden figure of time moved down a score of minutes with the jeweled scythe.

Then she rose, with an effort, and stood erect, almost defiant.

'Let me think! Let me think!' she murmured, pressing her hands against her bosom. 'It has come so suddenly; I was so unprepared. I had almost forgotten who and what I was—had almost learned to forget that I was an impostor, until—until his face rose before me! And now—now—let me think! Danger! Yes, there is danger; but can I not meet it and crush it? How much—how much does he know? Oh, if I could but still the throbbing at my heart that seems to set my brain on fire! Now, let me be calm! I will! and, setting her teeth, she threw back the long hair, and, clasping her hands in her lap, struggled for composure.

To be continued.

## Earthquake in Bavaria.

Munich, Bavaria, July 13.—A sharp earthquake was felt here at 9.40 o'clock; the walls of several buildings were cracked. The wave-like movement continued for three seconds, thoroughly terrifying the people, who fled from their homes and remained in the streets long after the disturbance had ceased. The shock was felt also in the surrounding villages, including Garmisch. A report from Oberammergau says that the shock was noticeable there, but that little damage was done.

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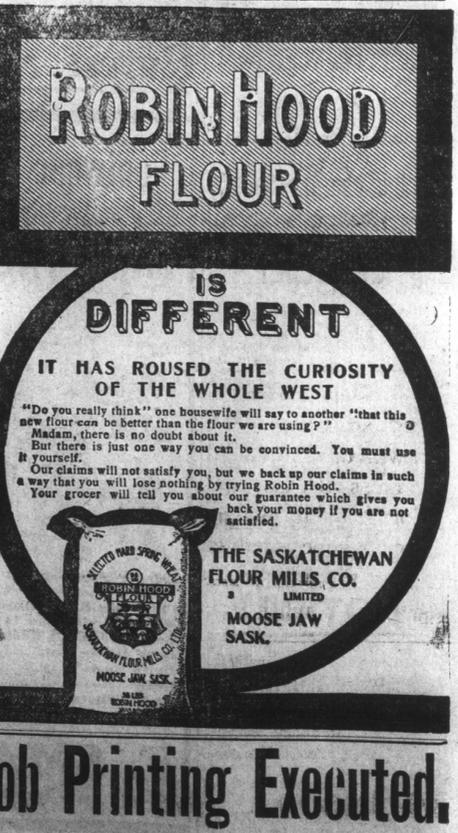
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