## Countess Westerleigh.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Lady Florence had drawn her hor noticed with a woman's quick eye how small and exquisitely gloved the

"How do you do, Lady Florence?" said Vane, with the forced cheerfulwhen we wish to conceal an embarrassment. "I didn't know you were in town: Weren't you going to Eastlake?"

Eastlake was one of Lord Warlock's contry places, and at this time of the year was generally occupied by

"We were to have gone," replied Lady Florence, "but papa is kept in London by some stupid political business. And why are you still i

The expression of pleased surprise which had lighted up her face calm hauteur and self-possession which ordinarily distinguished her.

Vane laughed. "Oh, I don't know!" he said. "Haven't made up my mind which place to go to vet. Dare say I shall be off somewhere presently. What a jolly day! more like summer than autumn, isn't it? The horses lock

While he had been speaking, Lad Florence had let her glance rest on Nora, who sat silent and with down-

"Yes." assented Lady Florence nerhans you will come and dine with papa to-night. He will be very grateful. We shall be quite alone You know he has had a slight attack of gout.'

"So sorry!" said Vane. "Thanks, shall be very pleased." The horses began to fidget, and he seized the ex cuse to add: "I mustn't keep you.

She gathered up the reins and nodded; then she bent forward and askin a low voice:

"Who is that with you?"

Vane leaned forward also. think you ever heard of him. His

She shook her head slightly as she glanced at Nora.

staying with me."

"Ernest Mortimer? No. handsome boy he is!"

"Isn't he?" said Vane, with a force ed smile. "Don't let him hear voi say so, though, for he's a-a nice modest boy at present-rather to shy, in fact."

Lady Florence smiled. "Introduce him to me." she said in the same low voice.

Vane turned to Nora "My cousin, Mr. Mortimer, Lady Florence," he said; "Lady Florence Heathcote. Ernest."

slightly, and Nora bowed. As sh

did so she lifted her great eyes to the beautiful face, and met Lady Florence's scrutiny with admirable calmness and presence of mind.



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### did not expect her to live

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thing more than slight surprise "We shall be very pleased if you

Mr. Mortimer," she said. Nora did not know whether Var. would wish her to accept or refus. and glanced at him with a fair embarrassment and hegitated

Vane tried to think of some excusibut, as is generally the case, nor would present itself

"Oh, thanks!" he said. "Erne would be very glad, I know; butwell, the fact is, he came up rathe dress suit with you. Ernest?"

Nora shook her head. Lady Florence smiled.

"That does not matter" she sai graciously. "Please come," and sl. ouched the horses with the ivory handled whip, and they started for

Vane, tugging at his mustach looked after her. "Well, we are in for it now!" 1 exclaimed, with rather an uneas

and anxious laugh. "Why did you let me go?" murmu: ed Nora. "I need not go now, nee

Vane shook his head.

"My dear girl, you don't kno: what a sacred thing a dinner en gagement is. There's no excuse for illness, and"-he glanced at her hal hoped the want of a dress su would suve us; but I might have known that Lady Florence wouldn'

Nora was silent for a minute

care a jot for that." two as they drove along; then sh

"That was a very beautiful lady. Vane nodded rather absently. He was wondering whether it would be possible for Nora to go through the rdeal before them without reveal-

"Yes-oh, yes," he said; "she is

es; I think I know what that

ed. "I did think of letting her into

epudiation of the idea which flew to Nora's face caused him to break

"No-no!" she breathed. "All right," he said, soothingly. It was only an idea, and didn't last wouldn't do. We mustn't take any

only be Lord Warlock and Lady side-table.

"Who is Lord Warlock?" asked

"Her father. He is an earl." what must I call him?" she

ly Florence Heathcote.' See?" Nora nodded, her eyes fixed intent-

"Anything else? Tell me every hing you can think of. I shall not nervous or afraid. Why should-

She set her teeth hard, and frown ed up at him in a manner that made

"Let me see, Oh, when Lady Florence rises, after dinner, you mus lite to her, but not too polite. It'

"I shall soon learn," she said: shall watch you."

"That's right," said Vane, encour agingly, though she did not seem t need encouraging. "By the way, who She was silent a moment, then she said very quietly:

"I don't know yet; I will think." Vane had been driving about re ther aimlessly, and presently foun opposite the Cavaliers' Club. H vas about to touch up the horse an ing. Among them was Lord Wall and at sight of the dog-cart he hel up his hand and came toward it. Van pulled up, and tried to look pleasan y unconcerned, but managed t

whisper, "Take care," to Nora. "Halloo, old chappie," said th are you this morning? Have yo ial way to Nora. "We must put yo! down for Cavaliers', Mortimer. Takt all round, it's the best and livel' est club in London; isn't it, Vane 'ome on, both of you. Don't tell m ou don't want a drink. You bot ook parched. Dacre will stand pottle of Mommery; won't you Dacre You can afford a whole case afte

last night." Sir Clement Dacre and Lord Cler ham had sauntered up by this time and had exchanged greetings. Var could see that they were all lookin with polite curiosity at Nora, and I would liked to have fled from ther but reflected that he could not a ways take refuge in flight, and wit an internal groan tossed the reins t Lord Clenham's groom and got down He was just in the act of turnin and offering his hand to Nora, bu

she was evidently more self-possess ed than he, and more clearly realized the situation, for she sprung from

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for more than a moment. I saw that the cart and sticking one hand in her jacket-pocket, followed him wit

Nora stopped short and looked round for Vane, who had been covert-

"All right, Baby," he said: "Mor-

lecorative beauty, and Nora was lost ion, which Lord Wally noticed with pleasure and pride.

"Not a bad room, eh?" he said. "I'll show you the dining and drawing room. The card-rooms are not so dusty, either. Will you have a ci-

"Thank you," said Nora, "but lon't smoke."

The announcement as much as th oice in which it was made caused ord Wally to open his eyes. "Not smoke! Really! How-hoy

rum! You will have something to rink, though. Soda and whisky sherry, Maraschino?" Nora wondered which she ought to

shoose, and hesitated, but Vane came o her assistance. "Try the club sherry, Ernest," he

said, from where he sat with Dacre "Thanks. I'll have sherry," said silver or stamps.

fora, with an imperceptible sigh of

The footman in the chaste but ex ensive club livery brought the varius drinks on a massive silver salver -the Cavaliers' was famous for it late-and she dropped into a chai

ould not bring herself to lounge

juite as far back as Lord Wally did "Not bad sherry, eh?" he said t er, wriggling his chair nearer. "Hul ad rare fun at Tempest's. Splendid ellow, isn't he?" he added in

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