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JAMES L. SUTHERLAND

BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER

HESTER, AND A LEGACY

He thought about her a good deal during dinner, and was rallied by Mrs. Vavasour on being so silent that one might almost imagine he was in love. He made no attempt to defend himself against her gay taunts, and allowed her to amuse herself at his expense much in the same spirit that a big dog submits to being worried by a little one without retaliation. In the intervals that were left him he went over again the conversation he had just had with Hester.

"She has a sweet face," he said to himself, as he sat turning his wine-glass round and round by the stem in an absent-minded way, "and it is perfectly charming when it lights up, and she is animated. I wonder why she wants money so badly? I wonder if she is saving it with some particular object in view? I wonder if she is engaged to some fellow, some bank clerk or doctor's assistant, and is saving to add her mite to the joint housekeeping?"

These speculations seemed to be displeasing to Lord Lynnmouth, for he frowned at the inoffensive whistles in such an absent-minded manner that Mrs. Vavasour rallied him again and asked him whether the lady he was thinking about was dark or fair. He replied that she was neither dark nor fair, but of a medium coloring, and by reason of speaking the absolute truth threw his questioner off the scent and caused her to conclude that his reflections had not been engaged on a lady at all. She turned to Lady Lynnmouth with some trivial remark, and the subject, and he was left in peace for a time.

"Yes," he added to himself, continuing the line of argument he had been before pursuing. "I am afraid that is what it is—she is engaged to some fellow, and they are saving up for the housekeeping. That is why her face lighted up so and her voice changed when she spoke of it. Well, just what one would wish, but I'll be bound the man isn't good enough for her—fond of him as she is!"—and he rose from the table with a frown that remained on his face even when the offending wineglass had disappeared from view.

It was not his fault that they arrived late at the Town Hall, but owing to an unfortunate split in Mrs. Vavasour's gloves as she put them on, he and the delay that ensued in scolding her maid and finding others of a suitable color. The performance was just about to begin, and Mrs. Laing-Stonor rushed down the hall to see her husband, declaring that every thing had been at a standstill till he came, and if he was really and truly going to make himself useful as he had promised, would he be so very kind as to hand the ladies' shawls to the room, and as he passed between the rows of seats many eyes were turned on him admiringly, for he was a handsome and distinguished looking man, his shoulders were broad, and he was very well dressed.

Lady Muriel's however, were fixed on her program as he went by, and she fancied that the man at her side would be able to hear the tintling of her heart and guess the reason why the color had rushed into her cheeks and was flaming there—a traitor to her secret. Lord Lynnmouth was her hero, her one perfect man, and she waited, happy and trembling, through the music which she scarcely heard, for the sake of the few words which she might chance to have with him at the end of the evening. When they came they hoarded them in her memory, and they were more to her than all the vows and protestations of eternal love which the man at her side was pouring into her ear whenever he got the chance.

The performers gathered together in the "green room" at the back of the hall where in a state of fuss and excitement that made them somewhat unmanageable, another had broken the string of his violin; a third had developed a sudden sore throat and was certain he should be as hoarse as a crow; a fourth felt nervous and excited, and he scratched off the program and allowed to sit among the audience.

Mrs. Laing-Stonor who was equal to every occasion, was hurrying backwards and forwards, encouraging, exhorting, and commanding like a veritable commander-in-chief. Lily Cox, in her blue gauze, with her mother's diamond necklace and pearl and gold fan, was monopolizing Harry Vereker, in a corner, and glancing surreptitiously at Lord Lynnmouth to see if he showed signs of jealousy at her flirtation. Violet Langworthy was receiving whispered encouragement from one of the tenors from town, who fluttered his eyes, and thought her flutterings sweetly feminine. Harry Vereker was trying to get a peep at Lady Muriel through the half-open "green room" door, and wandering in the intervals Lily Cox left him for reflection whether the "black-browed brute" at her side was making love to her when he whispered in her ear.

The concert went off as such concerts mostly do. There was some fairly good singing and some that was distinctly bad, a great deal of applause and still more laughter and chatting between the songs. Lord Lynnmouth handed ladies on to the platform "with distinguished grace," as it said in the local papers afterwards; Miss Philips went steadily through the accompaniments in a masterly manner; the performers exhibited their skill or their want of it with equal assurance, and the audience whispered and flirted and gossiped to their hearts' content. The hall was packed, and every one declared afterwards that Lynnmouth had never had a greater success in the way of concerts.

During the first song or two there was no one on the platform to turn over the music for Hester, but directly Lord Lynnmouth was released from the various small duties that Mrs. Laing-Stonor imposed upon him he came to her side for that purpose, and there he remained for the rest of the evening, deputing Harry Vereker to his vacant post at the platform steps. And he was duly thanked by Mrs. Laing-Stonor afterwards for his excessive amiability.

Later in the evening a little occurrence took place to which he was witness. A group of performers were standing at the "green-room" door, and it was time for the next singer to go on to the platform. At the last moment she discovered that she had left her music in the cloak-room, and Mrs. Laing-Stonor immediately turned to Hester with the request that she would fetch it as quickly as possible. The request was made more in the manner of a command, and for a moment Hester hesitated before she replied to it. She drew herself up, and the color rushed into her face as she assented to the request, but it was not uttered. In the next instant she had turned to do as she was asked. As she was passing Lord Lynnmouth stopped her.

"I would offer to go for you," he said, "but I am afraid that the ladies' cloak-room is forbidden ground to me!"

She thanked him and pushed her way through the crowd. She was ready with a smile for him on her return, and all signs of her resentment had vanished from her face. He drew nearer to her.

"It was abominably rude!" he said in a low voice.

"Oh, I didn't mind!" she replied.

He met her eyes and they both smiled.

"Was it one of the sixpenny insults you were speaking of?" he said.

"No, I call that one worth a shilling," she returned.

Then they both laughed again with a sort of mutual understanding that entirely robbed the episode of any little sting which might have held her in that moment.

"But, indeed," she added presently, more gravely, "I am not so thin-skinned as you seem to think. I am no fine lady who has been spoiled by the sun and the breeze, and who does not know how to take life. I am accustomed to fitting myself to other people's demands and caprices, whatever they may be, and I dare say it is remarkably good for me if that is the way you know it."

"Then a course of the other thing would be remarkably good for you too!" he exclaimed.

"What other thing?"

"Being spoiled and indulged by some one who cared very much about every trifle that might happen to you."

Again that dangerous accent in his voice and the answering flash in his eyes. She turned away quickly and plunged into conversation with someone—she scarcely knew whom—afraid of allowing herself time to dwell upon her sensations or of letting him see the effect his words had on her. His attitude towards her was a strange one, and she had not yet decided how to meet it.

Scotland, Ont., Aug. 26th, 1913.

"My wife was a martyr to Constipation. We tried everything on the calendar without satisfaction, and spent large sums of money, until we happened on 'Fruit-a-tives'. We have used it in the family for about two years, and we would not use anything else as long as we can get 'Fruit-a-tives'."

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"FRUIT-A-TIVES" is made from fruit juices and tonics—mild in action—and pleasant in taste. 50c. a box, 6 for \$2.50, trial size 25c. At dealers or sent on receipt of price by Fruit-a-tives Limited, Ottawa.

"No, only the trees were so thick and it was so dark!"

"He did not say anything, and she could not see him, but she fancied he was smiling."

"Don't tell me I am a coward," she said, with sudden shame, "for I know it only too well!"

"I am only too glad if you are," he returned, "as in that case you will probably not mind my having come to meet you."

"To meet me?" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I found when we got home that you were not in. I inquired of Dixon, whom I sent to the concert, and he said we passed you on the road, walking alone, after we stopped to put down Miss Langworthy. Dixon was on the box of the carriage, you know."

"And you came to meet me?" she replied, with increasing astonishment.

"Yes, I had no idea you were a prey to such fears as you seem to be— it was simply that I did not like the idea of your being out alone so late at night."

(To be Continued)

HOMESEEKERS' SPECIAL

Train Leaves Toronto 10.45 p.m. Each Tuesday.

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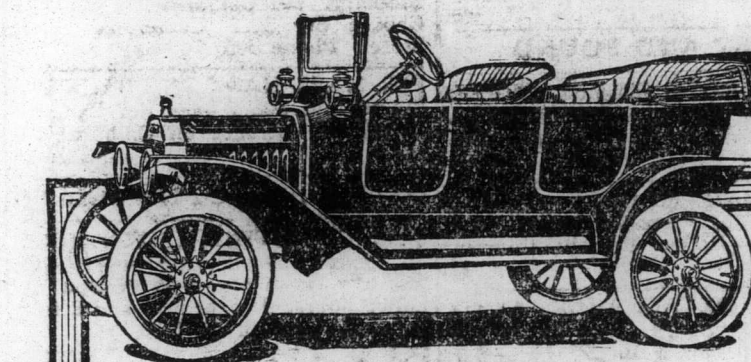
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