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S Overdale ave.,  
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hain street; Treas-  
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### A Marriage of Reason

By Maurice Francis Egan, Author of "The Land of Longworth," "Songs and Sonnets," "The Ghost in Hamlet," etc.

#### CHAPTER XIII.—Continued.

Mrs. Sherwood and Katharine sat opposite each other at the round table. A yellow-covered lamp in the centre cast a soft light on the two women. Mrs. Sherwood, erect, laughing, smiling, Katharine, thoughtful and pale, with a huge bunch of white pansies near her plate which seemed to give her certain consolation, as the stiff dinner proceeded, for Mrs. Sherwood never omitted a course or a wine, no matter who was absent. When the coffee was served and the servants had gone, Mrs. Sherwood took up her bunch of yellow roses and watched Katharine over it for a while. She was embarrassed; how should she begin to strike?

"I have arranged a lovely plan for your coming-out party, my dear," she said, "and I was thinking to-day that when we give a dinner in honor of your engagement to Mr. Percival that I shall have the centre of the table banked with moss and filled with growing ferns."

Katharine put down her cup. "I shall never be engaged to Mr. Percival."

"He will ask you again," "My dear," said Mrs. Sherwood, "you must—your must—"

Katharine raised her head proudly. "Aunt," she said, "I will do anything reasonable to please you—but I will never marry Mr. Percival."

"Suppose that Mr. Percival alone could save your uncle from ruin—suppose that these notes were over a month's notice turn your uncle and myself into the street—banish us from all this beauty and luxury."

Katharine opened her eyes as one intent. She looked at the exquisite chased silver coffee-cups and at the flowers and rich screen behind her aunt's chair.

"It is impossible!" "No. Mr. Percival can do all these things, unless you make it impossible." "He is a monster to threaten you!" cried Katharine.

"He has not threatened, but he can take his rights." "Mrs. Sherwood went over to Katharine and brushed her cheek with her lips."

"Will you save us?" "I can't save you!—Anything but that. Surely you do not want to make me wretched for life? You don't know what a vital thing religion is—it means trouble all my life for me, if I consent."

"I am not quite a heathen," said Mrs. Sherwood, curling her lips.

"But you are not a Catholic." Mrs. Sherwood bit her lip; she could hardly restrain herself from shaking Katharine.

"You must save your uncle or not. For me," said Mrs. Sherwood, "I know you have little regard."

Katharine rose, disengaging herself from Mrs. Sherwood's hand, which had rested on her shoulder, and went to the long window, filled with the dusk. She did not doubt her aunt's word; she was not accustomed to doubt.

"I met Mr. Percival to-day, and asked him to dinner for to-morrow night. He will speak to you again."

A sudden light filled Katharine's face; she turned to her aunt—"I will save you if I can."

"Oh, you sweet girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Sherwood, kissing her. "I shall have a tressou from Paris that will amaze these upstarts!"

"But uncle cannot afford it," you said," began Katharine.

"If you save us he can," said Mrs. Sherwood, "but do not humiliate your uncle by telling him what I have said. He would die if he knew I had appealed to you."

"I will do my best—I will do my best," said Katharine, hastily turning away. "I could not be ungrateful."

"I believe you," answered her aunt. "I have a box for the opera-go, dress, and we shall be in time for the third act of 'Lohengrin.' Hurry!"

Katharine looked pleased. Music was delightful to her at all times; she ran up to her room.

Mrs. Sherwood laughed as she put a soft wrap over her yellow silk.

"I knew that this chance of being a heroine would overcome her religious scruples and sentimental nonsense. What a fool she is! It did not need much diplomacy to overcome her. And now for the opera!"

Katharine came down, looking neither a heroine nor a martyr, covered with a fur cloak, and with the score of the opera in her hand. "I have conquered," Mrs. Sherwood said to herself.

CHAPTER XIV.—A Warning. It would be difficult to describe the pleasure with which Mrs. Sherwood enjoyed the opera. She disliked Wagner's music, but the knowledge that she had gained a victory gave her a serenity and a cheerfulness

that made even the German composer's choruses things of joy. Katharine was disposed of, and disposed of to the most desirable man in the town. She had done more at one stroke than half the maneuvering mothers could have accomplished during a whole season's campaign. Well she might rest in her well-cushioned chair in the Academy of Music and reflect on her laurels. Katharine might have made a better match, she reflected; but that would have only been done abroad, and there was no knowing whether a girl like Katharine would go well in the European market, even if backed by Mr. Sherwood's millions. Mrs. Sherwood looked at Katharine as she leaned over the edge of the box, with her flushed cheek resting on her hand, and wondered what people saw in her.

"Convent education can't be such a failure after all," she said to herself. "The idea of sane people admiring those simple German songs she sings—it's quite too foolish!"

Well, it was time to be complacent. Her niece would be Mrs. Wirt Percival, and her position in the best set would be fixed. Even that horrid Mrs. Percival, on that atrocious Mrs. Vavasour could not injure it. But, unhappily for her, Mrs. Sherwood's standard of judgment was utterly worldly, and she could not imagine the existence of any stand-

ard except her own. Had she been a little more unworldly, she would have understood Katharine better. She saw visions of social success take a house in London, and there would be telegrams in all the American papers in which her presentation at court by the wife of the American minister would be elaborately chronicled. The curtain went down on the act, and Katharine turned to her aunt, awakening suddenly from the spell of the music. There was a knock at the door of the box, and Wirt Percival, in an ill-fitting suit of clothes made by an English tailor, came in, accompanied by a tall, slim young man with white eyelashes and an eyeglass held in his right eye without apparent muscular exertion.

"Let me present Lord Marchmont," Wirt Percival said. "He is most anxious to meet you, Mrs. Sherwood. Lord Marchmont—Miss O'Connor."

Mrs. Sherwood made a stiff inclination. Katharine rose and made her courtesy, after the manner of her school, which was very quaint and graceful.

Lord Marchmont actually took out his eyeglass in order to see her better.

"Lovely girl, Percival," Mrs. Sherwood heard him murmur. She was very gracious to Wirt Percival, who sat down near her, while Lord Marchmont did not conceal his admiration for Katharine.

"Who is he?" Mrs. Sherwood asked, in a whisper.

"Who? Marchmont? Oh, he's the son of the Earl of Bassford—knew him in London; he comes over to marry a rich American, like the rest of 'em," said Wirt, with a laugh.

"He's not much to look at, is he?" Mrs. Sherwood mused. What a pity she had not another niece to whom Mrs. Sherwood would be generous! Fancy the dizzy happiness—the delirium of delight—of being aunt to Lady Marchmont! Wirt Percival was well enough, but the son of an earl was so much better. Mrs. Sherwood did not consider the character of the man at all; he was an earl's son, that was enough. She tapped him on the shoulder with her fan, interrupting his talk with Katharine and asked him to dinner.

The curtain rose, and the music began.

"Hush!" Katharine said. Lord Marchmont was politely silent, though the people in the opposite box chattered with all their might. He watched Katharine's changing color. There was sincerity, he admitted; there was unconsciousness. The young women in the opposite box were very sparkling and artificial. It did not require an opera glass to see that their eyes were as heavily "made up" with black pigment as those of the singers on the stage and their cheeks were heavily rouged. Lord Marchmont wondered why these fashionable Americans adopted the pastiche of the latest English fashions, when they could gain so much by being simple and unconscious. He looked with distaste on the heavy rouge plastered on Mrs. Sherwood's cheeks and observed with pleasure the natural color of Katharine's.

Mrs. Sherwood was not to verge foolish Katharine was not to verge a little—she compared her disappearance with the chattering and brilliantly-colored group in the opposite box. Mrs. Percival gave her a cold nod from the parquet. She

considered boxes vulgar, and said to Mr. Percival that only "new people" were so ostentatious. The sight of Katharine filled her with irritation. She liked the girl. In her heart, she did not want her to marry a non-Catholic; but she hated the thought that anybody should hold the favor of entering her family so lightly. She would have preferred to see Wirt marry the Lady Alicia, but, after all, Katharine was so simple, so natural, and so kind that she had a feeling she ought to belong to the Percivals.

After the opera, Lord Marchmont was polite enough to pay some attention to Mrs. Sherwood, and this gave Wirt Percival a chance to speak to Katharine. He adjusted her wrap, and she took his arm on their way through the foyer to the carriage.

"I hope you will give me a chance of renewing our talk at the cotillon, Miss O'Connor. I did not take your answer as final, you know. If you will give me a chance after your aunt's dinner-party, I shall—"

They had all made their way through the smiling, talking crowd, and they now stood in the vestibule, almost alone, for Wirt had walked more quickly than the rest.

"I do want to talk to you, Mr. Percival," Katharine said, eagerly. "But there is no time here."

Wirt's face lighted; she had reconsidered her determination, then. She certainly would make a creditable hostess at Bolingbroke. Even at this moment he sighed—"if her name was only Lady Alicia!" But, after all, he reflected, a man could not have everything.

"Your niece is the loveliest girl I have seen in America," said Lord Marchmont, enthusiastically. "I am glad you have asked me to dine with you. It's a great privilege to meet a girl like that. We have a great many American girls in London—a lot of duchesses are American, you know, and they're tremendously 'duchessy,' you know."

"Yes," said Mrs. Sherwood, stifling the title, "My Lord," on her lips. She wished she could cry out aloud to the assembled multitude "This is Lord Marchmont!" It might be vulgar, but it would be so satisfactory. If she could only see one of those newspaper people in the fact that she was attended by a real, live lord worked into the newspapers; but no professional scribe was in sight.

"We are marrying Americans greatly on the other side just now; it's quite the thing. Some of the smartest women in London are Americans, I assure you."

"Dear me, Lord Marchmont," said Lady Alicia, coming up and catching the words, "you say that just as if you were talking of the importation of the American hog."

"It's a matter of business," muttered young Dillon, who was with her. "A matter of reason," she corrected. "Americans when they become rich find their own country so frightfully dull that they like to live abroad; and it pays a girl to marry a title, and a good one. She can go to dinner before anybody else if it is a remarkably good one."

"You, my dear friend, couldn't marry me," she said, with a touch of malice, "though I am sure you would prefer to marry in your own caste. I'm poor, you know."

Lord Marchmont looked uncomfortable. Mrs. Sherwood wondered at Lady Alicia's frankness, and Mrs. Vavasour, who was standing in a corner waiting for a cab, cried out: "English continue to swarm into Philadelphia, there will be no living here."

As Mrs. Vavasour had great carrying power in her voice, there was an uncomfortable silence. When Katharine and Mrs. Sherwood had been helped into their carriage, Wirt and Lord Marchmont stood for a moment on the sidewalk, and Mrs. Sherwood heard the Englishman ask: "Who did you say that girl was?"

"Miss O'Connor."

"I am decidedly obliged for the introduction, old man. She's the sort of girl I admire. Rich?"

The carriage drove off, and a new idea took possession of Mrs. Sherwood. Why should not Katharine marry Lord Marchmont? This would be a better match than the Percival one. To be sure, she had heard discreditable stories about the young Englishman—he was poor, a fortune-hunter. But Mr. Sherwood could be induced to make a good settlement on Katharine if she should marry a lord, and then think of the delight of alluding to my niece Lady Marchmont!

It would be pleasant, too, to leave Kenwood and live in England. The Percivals were well enough if one stayed in Philadelphia; but if one wanted a

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"I did not notice," said Katharine, in whose head the music was murmuring still. "I fancy it would be very hard for you to give up the opera and all other luxuries, aunt."

"Of course it would," said Mrs. Sherwood, sharply. "What are you thinking of, child. Who's talking of giving up luxuries?"

"You know," you said that uncle was involved—"

"So I did; but I said that you might save him by—by making a good marriage."

Mrs. Sherwood was vexed; she was a diplomat; foiled; she had told her lie somewhat too prematurely. Suppose that foolish, headstrong, sentimental girl should persist in marrying Wirt Percival when Lord Marchmont might be caught, she groaned softly.

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What a strange girl! Who could understand her? She was willing apparently to marry Percival to save her uncle, and yet glad to throw him over to Lady Alicia and let her uncle go to ruin.

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"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Sherwood. "A plan? What plan can a girl like you have?"

"We shall see," answered Katharine, smiling behind her fan.

There was a crush of carriages in front of the Broad-street station. Mrs. Sherwood's made its way to the curbstone and stopped, for the theatre train to Kenwood was just due. Mrs. Sherwood was too busy with her wraps to answer. Suddenly the door of the carriage was opened and a woman's voice said: "Miss O'Connor?"

"Yes," answered Katharine, impulsively.

A note was thrust into her hand. The door closed. Katharine caught a glimpse of a woman's face. Where had she seen it before?

"You will show me that note when we reach the train," Mrs. Sherwood said, severely.

"Certainly," answered Katharine, "why not?"

She opened it—it was merely a folded paper and read: "You can help one who has suffered, and save yourself from future misery by coming to see Jane Mavrick at any time on Sunday or in the evening. There followed an address which Katharine hastily memorized."

When they reached the well-lighted car Mrs. Sherwood asked for the note. She frowned.

"Absolutely," she said, "the lower classes are becoming too insolent. I suppose this is some disreputable relation of yours."

Katharine flushed, but said nothing. She had the address safe in her memory, and she determined to put the case in her uncle's hands.

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