



Only a Beggar; — BUT — A Queen Among Women

CHAPTER XIV.

"Oh, let us come outside, and leave the old people to fight it out."

Diana shook her head smilingly, but wistfully; but the earl, whom no movement of hers escaped—he had been watching Diana without appearing to do so—came to Mabel's aid.

"Better go, my dear," he said, "or that tiresome child will give you no rest; and Diana, with a blush, allowed Mabel to draw her out. Of course, Dalesford followed; but Mabel turned upon him indignantly.

"Oh, Vane, you'll surely let me have her to myself for a minute or two?" she exclaimed. "That's where men are so selfish! He doesn't remember that he'll have you for the rest of his natural life!"

"I'll give you five minutes," said Dalesford longingly; "and that's four minutes more than I can really spare."

Mabel made a grimace at him, and, linking her arm in Diana's, led her to a seat, into which she plumped Diana with gentle force.

"Now, tell me all about it, Diana—I've really the right to call you Diana now, haven't I? But, of course, you won't tell me anything; I shall have to get it out of Vane. And he'll be worse than ever; he's so conceitedly happy. And no wonder! Shouldn't I be if I were a man! And you are really going to be my cousin! Diana, you'll let me come and stay with you when you are married?"

Diana laughed and blushed. "That will be a very long time to look forward to, Mabel."

"Oh, no, it won't. You won't catch Vane waiting very long. He's too bad for that. And, oh, Diana, promise me now, now this minute, that I shall be one of your bridesmaids!" she said eagerly. "I suppose you'll have ever so many; but, mind, mind, you must make room for me!"

The blush faded from Diana's face, and she looked rather grave.

"I think it is very likely that you will be the only one, dear. I haven't any relatives, or girl friends, like other girls."

"Haven't you?" said Mabel, with wide-open and sympathetic eyes.

"How strange!"

"Yes; it is strange," said Diana. "But there is only Aunt Mary."

"Well, that makes me safe, anyhow," said Mabel, with a sigh of satisfaction. "And how beautiful you will look as a bride, Diana! I don't wonder at Vane being so proud of you. You didn't see him while he was looking at you and Uncle Edward. And isn't he a dear old man—didn't he behave splendidly? There are times when I think Uncle Edward

must be the nicest man that was ever created. But there! I knew he would go down before you. He adores beauty, and you are irresistible!"

"You are an irresistible flatterer," Diana assured her. "Yes; Lord Wrayborough was very sweet to me, and I—I am very grateful to him. I did not expect—but I must not say any more on that point. I am very grateful to you all for being so kind to me."

Mabel's eyes opened wide. "Kind to you? You mean because we are all so glad you accepted Vane? Why, my dear Diana, it is the best thing that could have happened to him, and all of us. Why, you just saved him."

She colored, and looked down shyly. "I am only a girl, but, of course, I know how important it is that Vane should marry, should settle down. Of course, I know he has been wild, like—all the Wrayboroughs. But he is quite changed now. And you have changed him, you dear, sweet girl. Love you! I should think we should! Oh, here is Vane! What a bother! Vane, I am sure the five minutes aren't up."

"It is, my sweet child, and you are waiting in the drawing room."

"Of course, that's a fib!" retorted Mabel. "But I suppose I shall have to go." And, stooping, she kissed Diana, and ran in, pausing at the window to throw her another kiss.

Vane was all aglow with happiness. "What did I tell you, dearest?" he said. "I wish you could have heard my father singing your praises to Mrs. Burton. I haven't seen the dear old man look so happy for years. He told Mrs. Burton that our marriage would add twenty years to his life."

Diana looked up at him, with joy in her eyes, but still with a shadow of surprise in them. "It seems so strange," she said. "I can't be blind to the fact that your people ought not to regard our engagement as a good thing for you."

He laughed. "But what more can you want?" he asked. "What will convince you? Diana, you are the only beautiful woman I ever met who was really humble-minded and free from vanity. I have got a prize, indeed!"

As he spoke, lifting her hand to his lips, a carriage came down the road, and stopped at the front gate. "Good heavens! Another visitor!" he said disgustedly. "Yes; I suppose we must go in," he deplored, as Diana rose.

They went toward the house, drawing apart to a conventional distance, when they got within sight of the windows.

"Why, it's my Fairy Godmother!" Diana said, as she heard Mr. Fielding's voice.

"Your what?" Dalesford asked. "My lawyer, Mr. Fielding," Diana explained. "I call him my Fairy Godmother, because he has been so good to me; because he found me—"

"Found you?" echoed Dalesford. Before she could give him any more information, they had reached the window, and Mr. Fielding, catching sight of her, came forward to meet her.

"I have just come in time, my dear Miss Bourne, to hear some important and interesting news," he said, as they entered the room.

He stood and smiled at her, his thin lips drawn together, his eyebrows raised, his keen eyes looking from her blushing face to Dalesford's.

"I was going to write to you," said Diana, in a low voice.

"Of course, of course," he said, with a little bow. "This is Lord Dalesford? Lord Dalesford, you will permit me to offer you my heartiest congratulations. I have just expressed them to Lord Wrayborough." He inclined his head to the earl; and, at the same moment, cast a glance, as if casually, at Mrs. Burton, who was sitting with her head bent and her hands gripping each other. "Yes; my visit is a happy accident, and I am delighted to have arrived at such an auspicious moment. I have just been telling Lord Wrayborough, my dear Miss Bourne, that you have been good enough to grant me the inestimable privilege of calling myself your friend, as well as your legal adviser."

He had taken a chair, and leaned forward, with the self-possessed and alert manner which Diana remembered he had shown on her first visit to him at Lincoln's Inn. With his bird-like eyes, he seemed to dominate



the situation, to hold the others, as it were, in his grip. With his fine acuteness, his quick, intuitive insight, the earl saw that this suave, self-possessed man of law had something to say, and was going to say it.

"Most happy coincidence, Mr. Fielding," he murmured, with a smile. "Particularly happy for me. I am delighted to meet you. Of course, I know the famous Mr. Fielding by repute, but this is the first time I have had the pleasure of meeting him. Let me congratulate our dear child here on the advantage of possessing so valuable a friend and so efficient an adviser."

Fielding bowed. "Thank you, my lord. You are very kind. Yes, I need scarcely say that Miss Bourne's friendship, which I esteem beyond words, amply rewards me for any exertion I may have made in my efforts in watching over her vast interests."

He laid a slight emphasis on the word vast, and Lady Selina caught it, and looked up, with surprise and sudden interest. Vane also heard it, and vaguely wondered why the lawyer should use such an apparently inappropriate adjective in connection with Diana's small means—"enough to live upon." But the earl's smile did not flicker; and he leaned back, gently swinging his gold pince-nez.

"How vast they are," continued Mr. Fielding, addressing the earl, "you may not, perhaps, be aware, Lord Wrayborough."

The earl made a noncommittal gesture, and Mr. Fielding went on: "I myself have scarcely arrived at a proper estimate; but I suppose I should not be far wrong if I valued Miss Bourne's estate at very little below a million."

Vane was standing near Diana, and he turned to her, with an exclamation, a swift inquiry, an expression almost of reproach. Lady Selina gasped like a fish out of water; Mabel cried "Oh!" and stared at the pale-faced lawyer; and the earl dropped the pince-nez, and leaned forward, with an admirably feigned surprise, which gradually slid into satisfaction.

"My dear Mr. Fielding, that is a very large sum! Our dear Diana's interests are vast, indeed—"

Dalesford came slightly forward. His face was pale, and he was frowning.

"I didn't know," he said. He turned to Diana. "Diana, why did you not tell me?"

Diana hung her head for a moment, then looked at him appealingly.

"Why didn't you tell me, dearest? Why did you keep me ignorant of the fact that you were so rich, that you had so much money?"

"My dear Vane," murmured the earl, remonstratingly. "I quite understand! There has scarcely been time. If I may venture to say so, Diana did quite right."

"Quite right!" echoed Mr. Fielding. "Lord Dalesford would have received from me the information of Miss Bourne's enviable position. This is not the moment for business details; but, perhaps, I may be permitted to supplement my rather startling announcement with a few particulars. Miss Bourne's father, my—or—esteemed client, died abroad, leaving the whole of his fortune, his im-

mense fortune, to his only daughter and child. Mr. Bourne's state of health rendered it impossible for him to reside in England; and for many years he had not seen his daughter, who was left to the efficient and affectionate guardianship of her aunt, Mrs. Burton—"

He stopped suddenly, and rose, not abruptly, but in quite a self-possessed manner, for, though he had not been looking at her directly, he had seen the grip of her hands relax, and her thin form sway to and fro. She, also, had risen, and, stretching out her hands, as if groping in darkness, uttered a cry, and fell back in the chair.

So quick were his movements, notwithstanding his deliberate manner, that Mr. Fielding had caught her before she could fall to the floor. With a cry, Diana was at her side.

"Aunt Mary!" she exclaimed. "You are ill! Oh, what is it? What has happened? What have you said?"

They had all gathered round the fainting woman, in amazement and dismay; but Mr. Fielding, still self-possessed and still master of the situation, said calmly:

"If you will ring the bell, Lord Dalesford— Thank you!"

A maidservant entered, and she and Diana almost carried Mrs. Burton from the room.

All eyes were turned to Mr. Fielding, but he was quite equal to the occasion.

"An extremely nervous and highly strung lady—Mrs. Burton," he said quietly. "It is my fault. I ought not to have referred to her brother's death in her presence. It was inexcusable. Her state of health—"

"We will go," said Lady Selina. "Edward, Mabel. You will remain, I suppose, Vane?" Vane nodded.

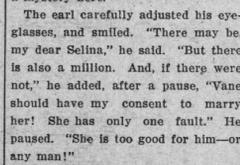
"You must come and see me, Mr. Fielding," said the earl, as he shook hands. "Vane, this is very distressing. Take care of that dear girl."

They got outside, and the carriage drove off. Lady Selina leaned back, as if she herself were threatening to faint; then she jerked forward, and, in a Cassandre-like tone, said impressively:

"Edward, mark my words, there is a mystery here."

The earl carefully adjusted his eyeglasses, and smiled. "There may be, my dear Selina," he said. "But there is also a million. And, if there were not," he added, after a pause, "Vane should have my consent to marry her! She has only one fault." He paused. "She is too good for him—or any man!"

(To be Continued.)



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New Zealand Will Develop Her Navy.

Wellington, N. Z., Nov. 16.—An important development in New Zealand's naval policy is foreshadowed by Mr. Massey, the Prime Minister, in a manifesto in which he outlines the platform of the reform party in the Dominion.

Every effort will be made, says the Premier, worthily to sustain New Zealand's share in the responsibilities and obligations of the British Empire.

The party he represented would undertake to preserve the national defence system already in operation throughout the country and at the same time they would promote a naval policy under which the Dominion would train its own personnel and gradually develop interests in the Imperial navy that could protect the Empire as a whole, at the same time maintain the supremacy of the British flag in the Pacific ocean, as well as ensure the safety of the trade routes from hostile raids.

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One Vast Charnel House.

The whole stretch of country from Newport to Dixmude to Ypres presents a picture so terribly appalling that it is difficult to describe it. Newport is greatly damaged by shell fire.

The country from a little south of there towards Dixmude is one vast charnel house of German slain. Belgian officers estimate the German corpses slain around Dixmude alone at thirty-seven thousand. It has been necessary day after day recently to send out Belgian soldiers, several thousand strong, to bury the German dead in the ground from which the enemy retreated.

The German troops must be suffering heavily from living day after day in the trenches amid these putrifying masses, masses which in many points form long heaps four feet high. They have had apparently no time to care for them, and little time to treat the wounded. Our hospital parties find Germans who have been lying three days in the lines beyond the Allies where their own comrades could not come with aid.

Shoe Factories Tender for Army Boots

In reply to an advertisement from the War Office, England, asking for tenders to supply winter boots for the soldiers at the front, the managers of our local boot and shoe factories are sending by the R. M. S. Carthaginian samples and price lists of the top boots made by these concerns.

The boots turned out by our factories for fishermen and seamen have always given satisfaction and are absolutely impervious to water. Our factories should also be able to turn out an equally serviceable army boot, and if the samples being sent by the Carthaginian meet with approval at the War Office, it is likely that our manufacturers will be given a share of patronage.

A Mean Act.

A very mean act was demonstrated a few days ago. Night watchman E. Skiffington lost a bundle of dry codfish which was picked up by a certain man who has kept the parcel and has never mentioned to anyone a word about his "good luck." An interesting case in court will likely follow if the property is not restored.

NASCOPE DELAYED.—Owing to the downpour of rain, yesterday the work of leading the Nascope was delayed. She will finish this afternoon, and will sail for Naples and Florence.

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