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The Countess of Landon.

CHAPTER XI.

"I am glad to hear you say so, very glad, dear mother," he said, fervently. "Irene's happiness is too precious to be risked in that way. As her guardian, you are, I know, sincerely anxious to insure that happiness so far as we poor mortals can; and I—ahem!—share your anxiety. Dear Irene! She deserves the best husband we can find for her—the very best. Ah, who is worthy of such a pearl above price?"

If he expected his mother to respond with "You, my son!" he was disappointed, for the countess, suffering his kiss upon her forehead, left the room with a calm good-night. Seymour looked at the closed door with a sinister smile.

"Will she oppose me, try and thwart me?" he muttered, stroking his chin. "One can never know what is passing in her mind. Madame's as inscrutable as a Sphinx. Anyhow, she can't dream of marrying her to that second-rate of a brother of mine now, and she can't be such a fool as to want the girl's money to go out of the family."

Consoling himself with the reflection, he went off to the smoking-room, and with whisky and cigars tried to drown and stifle the longing for one hand—only one hand—at his beloved baccarat.

After breakfast he made his way down to the stable with the proudest intention of picking out a horse for himself, for though he had proposed a ride with cheerful carelessness, he never got on a horse without a sinking at the heart and a queer sensation about the knees, and as Royce always bought for the Landon stables, he knew that a great deal of caution would have to be observed.

Every man in the stables, coachman, groom, helps, knew his object, and tipped each other the wink as his lordship, in his patent leather morning shoes, picked his way over the stones and smilingly gave the men good-morning.

"I am going for a ride with Miss Trevelyan," he said in his soft voice, "and I want a good horse; but it must be a quiet one, for my pleasure—one that will not upset Miss Trevelyan."

"Yes, my lord," said the head groom, who despised any one who could not

ride, and especially despised the noble earl, his master. "Here's one of Master Royce's, my lord. Bring out the chestnut, William."

The chestnut was brought out with some difficulty, and stood up on its hind legs by way of morning greeting.

"Er—er—I think not," said Seymour, turning rather pale and backing.

"Master Royce can ride him anywhere, my lord," remarked the groom, with well-feigned innocence. "He's a bit skittish at starting, but if you ride him on the curb and give him the whip pretty smartly at first, he will quiet down—that is, if he don't come across anything to upset him."

"Y—e—s, a beautiful horse, very," said Seymour; "but I am afraid it might prove troublesome to Miss Trevelyan. Something quieter, please—quite quiet."

The groom amused himself and delighted his fellow-servants by parading half a dozen of the most spirited horses in the stud; and at last, when Seymour had backed up against the wall, produced an old mare, which Royce would rather have carried than ridden, and his lordship at once declared in its favor.

"Thank you," he said, sweetly. "I am sorry to have given you so much trouble. Ahem!—I have a little pamphlet here which I think you will find interesting. Please read it, and—er—lay it to heart. Remember that all of us, even the humblest, can do something for our fellow-creatures;" and he handed them round.

The men all touched their caps as they took the tract, and kept a respectful silence until he had got out of earshot, then the head groom read over the title in a voice of bitter sarcasm:

"What can we do for Timbuctoo?" Well, I'm blessed if I know, but the very worst thing we could do would be to send you there. Saddle the mare, William. Lord, how I wish he'd have chosen Master Royce's chestnut! And yet I don't," he added in a lower tone, "for he'd most like have thrown it down or hurted it in some way, and I'd rather lose my place than anything should happen to Master Royce's chestnut. And to think as he's the earl, and Master Royce is, as you may say, nothing. What can we do for Timbuctoo? Here, take this thing out of my hand, or I shall have a fit."

The horses were brought round, and Irene appeared on the steps in a perfectly fitting habit, her yellow hair shining like newly minted gold under her deer-stalker; but she did not run down to pat the horse and kiss its nose, as she would have done if Royce had been going with her; and there was no bright smile on her face as Seymour came forward to put her in the saddle. Royce used to take her tiny foot in his strong hand and swing her up as if she were a feather's weight; but though Seymour had often looked on at the apparently easy performance with an envious sneer he found that it was not so simple as it looked, and after he had made one or two futile attempts, Irene put her foot in the stirrup and sprang up unaided.

The head groom had to hold the old mare's head while his lordship mounted, which he did as if he were clambering up an elephant; but the pair were off at last, and Seymour, with a smile of affected ease, trotted beside Irene, dilating on the beauty of the morning and his love of riding.

"An Englishman never feels so much at home anywhere as in the saddle," he remarked, bumping painfully up and down. "With us the love of the horse is second nature. Er—er—I hope yours is a quiet one, Irene."

"Quite," she replied, with some surprise.

"I am glad of that," he said, tenderly. "I would not have you meet with an accident for all the world."

"There is no fear of that. I ride her constantly; besides, Royce broke her for me." The sentence had escaped her unthinkingly, and she looked aside, and so did not see the evil scowl which passed for a moment over his face.

"I do not know that that is calculated to make me more easy, Irene, dear," he said, softly.

"No one can break a horse like Royce," she said in a low voice, and with a glance almost of defiance in her eyes.

"Ah, yes, poor Royce!" he murmured, with a pitying contempt that stung Irene like a stroke from a whip.

"But we must not talk or think of him on such a lovely morning. Now, where shall we go?"

"Anywhere; I do not care," she said,



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laconically, for every nerve was tingling under his "poor Royce!"

"We will go over Gorse Common, then," he said, blandly, reflecting that if he should happen to come off, it would be softer falling than the hard road. They turned on to the common and he kept up a stream of talk; but this morning he said nothing of Timbuctoo, but dilated on the extent of the Landon estates, and the responsibility they entailed upon their owner.

"I often feel that I am too much of an absentee," he murmured, "that I ought to see more of the people Providence has intrusted to my charge. But Monk Towers is too large for a bachelor, you see, and I should not care to live there until I—er—married and settled down. I suppose my mother and—er—you, too, dear Irene, often wonder why I do not settle down, as it is called?"

Irene awoke from a reverie in which Royce was the central figure.

"I—I beg your pardon. Yes; I suppose so."

"Ah," he sighed; "how little we know of each other's hearts! With me marriage is so sacred. Whoa! Wh—what is my horse doing about for? Do you think anything has stung it?"

Irene repressed a smile.

"It is only because she has got on the grass."

"Oh, yes, of course," he asserted, kindly, wishing to Heaven they had kept on the road. "Marriage is so sacred a thing to me that I could not care to think of it until I had had some consideration. The heart, dear Irene—the heart and its dictates must be considered before any worldly advantage, though I fear that too often the contrary is the case in this sordid age. I am sure you agree with me."

"Oh, yes," said Irene, absently. She was longing to stretch her horse in a gallop; long before this she and Royce would have been tearing over the greensward, laughing and shouting to each other.

"A marriage without love is a—er—desecration and sacrilege, and so I have remained single. But the time had come when—I am sure there is something the matter with my horse, Irene, and I am afraid it will startle yours."

"There is nothing the matter," she said, quietly. "They both want a gallop, that is all. Shall we gallop them to the cottage there—Mrs. Hooper's?" and she pointed to a small thatched cottage standing on the edge of the common.

"Mrs. Hooper's?" he said, jerkily, for the mare continued "dancing." "Who is that? I don't remember her. The cottage used to be empty."

(To be continued.)

Black pipings are used on a blouse of red crepe worn with a gray tailleur.

The intricately carved Spanish comb gives a touch of dignity to the coiffure.

The report of the University of Minnesota on its music and library courses is similar to other middle-western institutions. More students are identified with music than ever before and students drew 41 per cent. more books than in the previous year.

The Federation of Music Clubs has home, school and community music projects, interest in which has never been equalled. The radio is being employed to broadcast lectures on art "to show that art is not difficult to understand."

Newberry Library here seems destined to become the center of interest.

Fashions and Fads

With a blouse of figured crepe is worn a plain crepe skirt of very fine plaiting.

The sports frock is incomplete without its scarf, either attached or separate.

An evening wrap of crepe has a voluminous, box-plaited collar of the material.

The double-breasted box-coat of the new tailored suit is particularly youthful.

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Demand for Better Literature is Noted in Library Reports

CHICAGO, March 12 (A. P.)—If the mind of the average American is indicated in the selection of his books and works of art, then matter tending to a sobriety of thought and a desire for knowledge predominates over what some critics and philosophers have termed the "jazz age" and its appeal for material regarding sex, scandal and the criminal. The most noted increase is in the general subject of religion.

Large libraries in division points of the country, universities, literary, music and art institutions, publishers and dealers without exception report an interest in reading and the arts not observed in recent years. The popular demand by groups embraces the subjects of religion, biography, psychology, etiquette, science, astronomy, radio, drama, poetry, home economics and vocations. Fiction circulation maintains its positions but librarians report the public is requiring that it be clean.

Art and music enjoy a demand not heretofore as pronounced, due principally to widespread activity of federations and organizations which are endeavoring to promote their interest in the home and community.

One of the largest publishers in Great Britain said he found America the best buyer of good books.

The world war is partly responsible for the era of better reading matter, according to the head of a leading book firm here. Army and navy libraries, depleted of light reading, offered histories, biographies, technical books and essays to the service man, he explains. Once the desire for this kind of reading was created, they became eager to learn. After the war they set about studying books which would prepare them for a new place in the business and social world.

The daily newspaper is another influence in turning the public reader into the channels of literature. Regular book and art review pages have become established features.

Another leading book dealer here believes the age of novels is past and that biography, industrial and technical books and historical novels will to a large extent replace the "tapper" novel dealing with love, crime and sex subjects. He says that where formerly first editions of successful novels ran 250,000 copies they are now, in many instances, less than 100,000 copies. War novels are in the discard although war memoirs by diplomats and officials are still good sellers.

Trade subjects are having a big and before the war learned his trade by experience, is now backing up this experience with technical knowledge. High wages have enabled the worker to buy good books.

In letters to the American Library Association, the Los Angeles library says the most striking gain in the last year was in applied Christianity and religious education. The two best circulators were a life of Christ, and a book on etiquette.

Etiquette, home building, vocations, religion, radio and sports are leading subjects for library patrons in St. Louis.

There are long waiting lists for two books on religion at the Chicago Library. Biography, drama and travel come next. There is a notable revival in Shakespeare. Radio is an absorbing subject. The gain in circulation last year averaged more than 1,000 a week.

Six problem books, especially those going into sordid details, are not wanted by readers in the Washington Library. Fiction took a decided drop in circulation but has started back. Translations, biographies, drama, psychology, modern poetry, and home economics are leading in popularity there.

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