

One in a Thousand, BUT TRUE TO THE LAST

CHAPTER XI.
A CONSUMMATE ACTOR!

"Perhaps not, but it's very unpleasant," he says, coolly. "Kiss me, baby."

"I wish you wouldn't tease so, Adrian," I say, crossly; "and don't call me baby; I don't like it."

He looks at me curiously for a moment; then, seeing by my face that I am serious, drops me, and says, with mocking solemnity:

"Allow me to give you a chair, Lady Charteris."

I do not laugh, as he expects I shall, but take the seat in grave silence. He looks at me in a troubled way, but does not attempt any explanation; and, when luncheon is all cleared away, and we are again alone, he lights a cigar and smokes it, leaning against the chimney piece. Still we do not speak, but once I cough.

"Does this annoy you, Audrey?" he says, alluding to the cigar.

"I don't mind it," I answer, indifferently.

"I say, baby," he says, presently coming to the side of the sofa, and looking the while very big and handsome. "Is anything the matter?"

I do not answer—only turn my face away from the gaze of those searching, gray eyes.

"Because, little woman"—sitting down on the extreme edge of the couch, and taking hold of my unresisting hand—"if ever I say anything to vex you, you must always tell me for I often say things which are stupid, or might mean something else without ever knowing it."

I do not answer; but I feel that the tears I cannot keep back are forcing their way under my closed lids.

"Why, my darling," he says, tenderly—yes his tone is tender, false though it may be—"is it that you are ill, or have I said anything to make you like this? Tell me, my dear, for I—"

"Lady Lasselles is announced at this moment."

Adrian rises hastily, with a word on his lips which is anything but complimentary to her ladyship, and stands, black as any thunder cloud to receive her.

"Don't put your cigar out," she says, sweetly. "I like the smell of tobacco—really."

"You are very kind," returns Adrian, courteously; "but it has been out some time. Audrey did not like it."

"I never said so," I put in, for I am not going to let Theo have any advantage over me.

"No, my darling; but you coughed, and that was enough," he answers, calmly.

"Well, I really like it," asserts Theo; "it prevents a room from smelling moldy."

"The last time I was at Park Royal," I put in, stubbornly. "Lasselles brought his cigar into the breakfast room, and you told him that if he stayed a moment longer you should faint."

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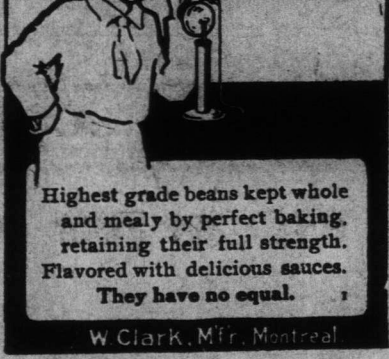
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"Did I, really? Ah, well, I've grown wiser since then!"

"And you declared that it choked you even out of doors."

But to this Theo does not reply at all; she only looks up at Adrian, as much as to say, "See what a difference I make between you!" But, unfortunately, he is looking out of the window, and does not see her.

"And how are you, Audrey?" says Theo, presently. It was such a pity you couldn't come with us this morning.

"Oh, no!"

"What makes you shiver so?"

"Nothing; I was only—only thinking."

"Thinking! And what were you thinking about? Something disagreeable, I'll swear!"

But I do not answer; and Adrian draws me to him, and makes me sit down beside him.

"Now, tell me instantly what you are thinking of," he says, imperatively.

"I cannot."

"Nonsense! What business have you, I should like to know, to have a uncle thought you cannot tell me? You don't mean to say you have a secret from your husband—a whole secret, all to yourself, which you are so greedy that you can't, or won't, tell it to me?"

"Have you no secrets from me?" I say, quietly.

His eyes droop before mine, and a dark, crimson streak stains his forehead.

"If I have, my very dearest," he says, gravely, "I keep them because it would not add to your happiness if you knew them."

"Adrian," I ask, desperately, "I am your very dearest?"

The utterly puzzled, blank expression which comes over his face reassures me.

"Why, baby," he ejaculates, after gazing at me for several minutes, "what on earth has come over you? Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"I—I didn't know," I stammer.

"You didn't know, you stupid, little goose!" shaking me, and then holding me closer to him than ever.

"Whom do you think I am likely to care about besides yourself? Why, child, we have seen nobody but Theo, and, surely, you are not fancying—oh!" he breaks off, going into fits of laughter; "imagine me deserting you for Theo! Why, my baby, I should lose everything and gain nothing! In the first place, Lasselles would break my head, and very properly, too, if he heard of it; in the second—oh, I can't enumerate the disadvantages! But to change my own sweet, pretty darling for that mixture of ice and fire—well, catch me, if I had a chance, that's all!"

"Well, but—" I begin.

"Now, I won't have any 'buts,' so that's all about it," he says, lifting me onto my feet. "Do go and put on

little surprised she came here this afternoon."

"I suppose she came to see how I was," I said, dubiously, for in my heart of hearts I know this was not the reason.

"I suppose she did; and, having done her duty, she has gone away, and we need not bother our heads about her any longer. Come, it is growing dusk; let us make the most of the time we have to ourselves."

I cannot understand my husband, if I had not heard what he had said to Theo last night. I should certainly fancy that he rather dislikes her than otherwise, and that he is heartily glad that she has taken her departure so soon. Oh, if I could but forget it all—blot it out, as though I had never heard it, and fancy I am the one woman he loves in the whole world! If I could—but I cannot; those words seemed burned into my brain, branded on my heart. "I married her because she was so like you, but—"

"Are you cold, darling?" says Adrian, noticing how I shiver.

"Oh, no!"

"What makes you shiver so?"

"Nothing; I was only—only thinking."

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your things, or we shall be having Theo back—and then where will you be? There—when I return, a few minutes later—you look all right again. Do you know, child, it's too late to think of Richmond. We'd better see what they can do in the way of dinner at Hoborn; and we can settle then where to go, while we are eating it."

I am almost happy again. He cannot be speaking falsely; he cannot be acting. Surely, no man could be so utterly blind to honor, so base as to speak as he has done, and not speak the truth. I will not believe it. I make a resolution when we are in the hansom that I will not think any more of the conversation I overheard at the opera. Probably, if I told Adrian all about it, he would, and would explain it all to my satisfaction; but I will not tell him. I will do better than that, for, although appearances are against him, I will trust him, and think no evil.

"Baby," says Adrian, suddenly breaking the silence. "I shall have to go to the war office to-morrow morning."

"Oh, will you?" I say, blankly.

"Why?"

"About the majority, darling. I shall be away only till luncheon, or so. I had thought of trying for extra leave, but, as matters have turned out, I can't expect it—indeed, we may have to go back sooner."

"I don't mind," I tell him, putting my hand into his.

"Nor I," he says, heartily; "but I daresay we shall get very sick of Idminster. What shall we do to-morrow?"

"We have to dine at Mr. Herbert's."

I answer; "and—oh, Adrian, I am so tired of London!"

"Well, do you know, and so am I," he says. "Let us take French leave, and finish our honeymoon all by ourselves."

"May we? Then suppose we go abroad?"

In making this suggestion I am actuated, not by a wish for sightseeing, but to get out of the way of the English nation in general. Adrian's reply damps my ardor.

"Utterly impossible!" he says, decidedly.

"Why?"

"Well, don't you see, to go abroad, I should have to apply for foreign leave, and the application must be sent in ten days before the leave commences; and, as we have only about a fortnight left before we must go back to the regiment, it would be of no use. So, you see, darling, it can't be done; but we can go down into Devonshire, or to Brighton, if you like. I think the north would be too cold for you."

"Oh, let it be Devonshire!" I cry eagerly. "Brighton would be no better than London, and I am so tired of seeing people we know."

"Great bore, aren't they?" says Adrian, as we stop at our destination; and he says it as if he means it.

(To be Continued.)

Evening Telegram Fashion Plates.

The Home Dressmaker should keep a Catalogue Scrap Book of even Pattern Guts. These will be found very useful to refer to from time to time.

9638.—A SIMPLE BUT ATTRACTIVE DESIGN.



Ladies' House or Home Dress.

White ratine, trimmed with pique embroidered with black dots is here shown. The right front crosses low over the left, and the closing on waist and skirt is at the front. The short sleeve is finished with a straight cuff. The collar is shaped to form a facing over the front. The Pattern is cut in 6 sizes: 32, 34, 36, 38, 40 and 42 inches bust measure. It requires 6 yards of 36 inch material for a 36 inch size.

A pattern of this illustration mailed to any address on receipt of 10c. in silver or stamps.

9640.—A CHARMING FROCK FOR MOTHER'S GIRL.



Girl's Dress.

Brown chambray with striped gingham in brown and white for trimming is here shown. Square inserts of Bulgarian embroidery finish front and sleeves, and buttons in self color add to the decoration. The waist has the drop shoulders with shaped extension forming the sleeve portions, and the skirt has a panel that extends over the hips and back to form a belt. The design is suitable for any of this season's dress fabrics. The Pattern is cut in 4 sizes: 8, 10, 12 and 14 years. It requires 3 1/2 yards of 36 inch material for a 12 year size.

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