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WM. DEMUTH & CO.
New York

For Love of a Woman;

OR,
New Romeo and Juliet.

CHAPTER XXI.
AN ART PATRON.

"Well, my dear Percy, what do you think of my dear young ward?"

Percy Levant raised his head and looked at him with a curious expression.

"Give me some wine," he said; then, after he had drunk a glass, he demanded, almost sternly, "Why did you not tell me?"

"Tell you what?" asked Mr. Spenser Churchill, with a chuckle. "I told you she was a charming young lady."

"And you wished me to think that you lied in saying so," retorted the other. "Why did you not tell me that she was as beautiful as—she is?"

Spenser Churchill chuckled again.

"My dear Percy, I thought that a little surprise would not come amiss. If I had told you that she was pretty—"

"Pretty!"

"Well, beautiful—lovely—you would not have believed me!"

"No, I should not," he said, curtly. "Don't say any more. I want to think! Great Heaven! she is like a dream! Stop! Don't talk, I say. I'm not equal to any of your smooth platitudes at present. Let me be in peace!"

Mr. Spenser Churchill laughed softly.

"Certainly, certainly, my dear Percy," he said. "Yes, I can understand your astonishment. This claret is very fine—"

"No more!" said Percy, rising and taking a step or two across the room, with his arms behind his head bent upon his breast again. "Let us go to them."

"I'm quite ready," said Spenser Churchill, smiling with intense enjoyment.

They went into the drawing-room.

And the Worst is Yet to Come—

FORE!

self, he has scarcely a friend in the world," said Spenser Churchill, sipping his tea and sighing. "I am counting so much on you and Lady Despard's sympathy, my dear Miss Marlowe! A word of encouragement from such kind hearts—as yours will go far to console him for the cruel disappointments he has endured. Ah! he is going to sing, I see. Now you will see if I spoke too highly of his voice and abilities."

Percy Levant was certainly going to sing, but he seemed somehow loth to begin. For a few minutes his fingers strayed over the keys irresolutely, then he struck a chord and commenced.

He had chosen not an elaborate specimen of the flowery school, but a simple Brittany ballad, and he sang it exquisitely. Doris, as she listened to the long-drawn notes that seemed to float on elder wings through the room, felt a singular sensation at her heart. It was as if this stranger had defined the trouble of her young life, and had put "it into" music. With tightly compressed lips she sat fighting back the tears that threatened to flood her eyes, her hands closely clasped in her lap, her eyes fixed on the ground, unconscious that Mr. Spenser Churchill's eyes were covertly fixed on her with a keen watchfulness.

The last notes of the song died away, and Lady Despard's soft, languid voice poured out her praise.

"Oh! but that is very, very beautiful, Mr. Levant, and you have a lovely voice! How kind of you to come and sing to us! And I am so grateful to Mr. Churchill for bringing you!"

He had risen and bowed to Lady Despard; but his dark eyes looked beyond her, and sought Doris's face.

Her lips trembled, but she forced a smile. Taking it as a request, he returned to the piano and sang again.

Lady Despard was in raptures; but he prevented her asking for another song by going across to Doris.

"Lady Despard will not play; will you?" he said. "You are not afraid now?"

"Yes, more than afraid," she said, with a smile.

"Will you sing with me? Here is a duet," he said, quietly, his eyes downcast.

"Do, dear!" said Lady Despard. "Miss Marlowe sings like a professional, Mr. Levant."

Doris rose reluctantly, and he led her to the piano.

Mr. Spenser went and sat beside Lady Despard, and began to talk to her in an earnest but softly persuasive tone. The two voices at the piano rose and fell in harmony, and seemed to act as an accompaniment to his.

"Isn't it beautiful?" said Lady Despard. "Their singing together is simply delicious!"

"And if your ladyship assents to my proposal, they can sing together as often as you please!" he murmured, insinuatingly.

She laughed and nodded.

"That's true. Oh, yes, just as you like. I'm sure he is most interesting, and such a perfect gentleman!"

"Ah, yes," said Mr. Spenser Churchill. "I would not have brought him to you if he had been anything less. And it is settled, then?"

"Yes," nodded her ladyship.

He rose at once and looked at his watch.

"I will make all arrangements," he said, in a low voice. "Say nothing to him to-night."

The two men said good-night, and Percy Levant found himself outside, his brain in a whirl, his heart beating wildly.

"Well, may one ask your highness what you think of my ward now?" said Spenser Churchill, softly.

Percy Levant thrust his hands in his pockets.

"Has she been ill, or is it trouble that makes her look like that?" he asked, in a grave, thoughtful tone.

"Trouble," said Spenser Churchill. "Poor girl! Yes, she has been ill, too; but she is better, and the change will completely set her up, I hope."

"Change?"

"Yes," he purred. "She and Lady Despard go to Italy next week," and he smiled as he struck the blow and saw Percy wince.

"To Italy next week!" He turned upon him. "What are you scheming? What are you doing? Why did you take me to see her to-night, if—Do you think I am made of stone; that, like yourself, I've no heart? To Italy!"

"Yes," murmured Spenser Churchill, "and I have arranged that you shall go with them—"

Percy Levant started again, and, stopping, confronted him with a pale, eager face.

"What?"

"Yes, exactly! You are to go with them—as what shall we say?—friendly cavalier, courier, what you will—anything will serve as an excuse. What do you say? Perhaps, after all, you regret your bargain! If so, say so, and I'll release you."

Percy Levant caught him by the shoulder and held him in a savage grip.

"You—you devil!" he said, fiercely, almost wildly. "You know that I cannot! If I had not seen her I might have had the strength; but now—"

He withdrew his hand, and, almost thrusting the other man away from him, strode on.

CHAPTER XXIII. A SAD HOME-COMING.

Lord Cecil Neville was a man of his word. He had pledged himself to remain in Ireland until the mission he had undertaken was completed, and he meant keeping his word, though his life depended on it. And it seemed to him that more than his life, his happiness, hung in the balance. He had written again and again to Doris, and had received no answer from her with a keen watchfulness. That they had reached her was evident from the fact that none were returned through the post to him. To all his passionate attempts for an explanation of her silence not one word came from her.

Life had gone fairly smoothly for Viscount Neville up to this, and his hot, impetuous nature—inherited from his mother's side of the family—found it difficult to endure the suspense. Many men would have broken their word and returned post-haste to England and Barton, but a pledge was a solemn thing to Cecil Neville, and, like a soldier on duty, he stuck to his post.

It is not necessary to speak in detail of what he accomplished in Ireland, but this much may be said: that he found the people in the right and the agent in the wrong, and that that agent had a bad time of it. It may be added that Lord Neville succeeded in a few short weeks in winning more hearts among the marquis's tenants than all the Stoyles for centuries had been able to do, and that before many days had passed "the young lord," as he was called, was regarded as a friend and protector, and many a faltering voice called down a blessing on his head, and implored him to remain in "the old country." The Irish are a warm-hearted people, quick to resent an injury, but equally quick in their gratitude for a benefit. This handsome young nobleman, who had relieved them from their oppressor and done his best to better their hard lot, received his reward in the shape of an affectionate gratitude which he should remember and cherish all his life through.

The absentee landlord, the man who screws the last penny from the tenant, and spends it in Paris or London, has been the curse of the country; and it was because Lord Neville saw this, and owned it freely, that the people trusted him.

Often, when he had returned from a day's inspection of the estate, and had relieved the oppressed, he wondered what the marquis would say when he heard what his ambassador had done! Often when, tortured by an anxiety respecting Doris's silence, he spent the night pacing up and down his room, he vowed that when they were married they would come and live among these people, who had welcomed him so readily, and so gratefully recognised his efforts on their behalf.

But for the constant hard work, the incessant travelling, Lord Neville would have suffered more than he did; for, as the days wore on and no news of Doris reached him, he began to imagine all sorts of terrible things. One night he dreamed that she was dead, and woke trembling and shaking, half-persuaded that he had heard her voice calling to him.

All day her image haunted him, and he found himself pulling up his horse, and sitting staring vacantly before him, recalling her last words, her shy, passionate kiss; and then he would dash forward and try and persuade himself that his letters had, in some way, miscarried, and that all would be well.

(To be Continued.)

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