

A Millionaire; or, Countess Westerleigh.

CHAPTER IV.

"Two days," she replied, as she smoothed the pillow and sheets of rough linen, and laid her cool hand on his brow. "Yes, you are better now; the fever has left you; you will be well soon."

"Oh, yes," he said. "I'll get up and cease bothering you. I must have been a terrible nuisance! Two days! I didn't think I was so much knocked about as that!"

"Some—most—men would have been killed," she said, in a low voice; "but you are one of the strong ones, sir. I think you could take some broth now, Mr. Tempest."

"Thank you," he said; "you know my name—oh, I forgot, I told your niece."

She nodded.
"And if you hadn't I should have known it. You have mentioned it often and in your delirium. You are the nephew of Squire Vale, sir?"
"Yes," said Vane; "I was going there, as I told you. I hope you haven't taken the trouble to send word to him, for he did not expect me."

"No," she said; "I did not." She paused a moment. "You wonder at that? I had my reasons for not doing so."

"Reasons?" said Vane.
She nodded, her eyes fixed on him.
"Yes; you are here by accident, Mr. Tempest; but for your fall and injury you would not have found this cottage. No one, no traveller or tourist, comes this way, for it is right off the beaten track, and the road to it leads to no other place. We live in seclusion and quite out of the world, even the little world of this wild coast, and we live thus by choice and necessity. We have no desire to mix with other people. If I had sent to the Hall some one would have come from there, and the place—we would get known and talked about—"

She paused, still looking fixedly at him.
Vane nodded.
"I understand," he said. "Of course, I can see"—he hesitated—"that you are not what you seem to be."

Her lips closed tightly.
"We are just a plain fisher folk, sir," she said.
Vane did not press the point.
"Very well," he said, earnestly. "At any rate, I know what you mean—what you want me to do."

She looked at him inquiringly, waitingly.

"And when I leave here, which I will do the first moment I can, I will forget that I have ever been here, or seen the place or you. I will tell no one."

An expression of satisfaction came into her eyes.
"Yes," she said, as if accepting his promise with perfect confidence. "That will be better. I can trust you. You are a gentleman."

"I hope so," said Vane, with a faint smile. "I am as much a gentleman as you are a lady."

"I am a plain fisherwoman," she said, gravely. "But you must not talk any more. I will bring you some broth directly. I am afraid you are not so very comfortable."

Vane made haste to assure her.

There was no one in the room. A kettle was simmering on the fire, and a basin of milk, set to "cream," stood beside it. The cloth was laid for breakfast, and the whole had a pleasant look of rough comfort. The door was locked, so that he was virtually a prisoner. This amused him, and he sat down to wait for the appearance of one of the women. After a minute or two he heard the key turn, and the elder woman entered. She had some fish in her hand, and smiled at him gravely.

(To be Continued.)



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that he had never been more comfortable in his life, but she looked round the small room and shook her head as she left him.

She brought him some broth in a little while, and Vane felt decidedly better after it, and fell into a sleep that lasted some hours. When he awoke he knew that he was on the road to complete recovery, and enjoyed a second cup of broth with a thick slice of home-made bread which his nurse brought him.

"I think I could get up," he said.
"To-morrow," she responded, with a faint smile at his impatience. "Is there anything you would wish me to do—any message you would like sent?"

"No," said Vane, thanking her. "As I said, my uncle does not expect me, and it doesn't matter if I arrive at the Hall a day or two later than I thought to do."

Then he remembered to ask after the young girl.

"I hope your niece is none the worse for the storm and the excitement," he said.

She smiled and shook her head.
"She is used to storms and not apt to get excited," she replied. "We who live on this rough coast are accustomed to dangers both by sea and land."

"I can easily believe that," remarked Vane. "I had no idea such wild places existed in England. My adventures would not read badly in an old-fashioned novel of the wreck and smugger type."

She said nothing in response to this, but left him, and Vane turned over on his side and gave himself up to speculating on the identity and history of these two strange women.

She had called herself a plain fisherwoman, but Vane knew that no fisher-folk spoke as she spoke, or possessed her manners. What was their reason for living in this wild secluded spot, and why did they keep the door of their cottage barred and locked, as if it were a fortress or a prison?

"I should like to see them," he mused, with a smile. "What picture he would make of the girl with her deep, flashing eyes and black hair. However, he never will see them, for I've promised to hold my tongue about them and the place."

He fell asleep and dreamed all kinds of absurd dreams, in which the cottage, the bridge, and the two solitary women figured grotesquely.

When he woke in the morning the sun was streaming through the narrow window of his tiny bedroom, and he was delighted to find that he was able to get out of bed. He dressed himself, but slowly, for he still felt weak, and, as he would have put it, "wobbly;" and while he was doing so, he saw that there was a second door to his room. It was a low one, made of thick planks, and fastened with a big padlock. At the same time he noticed, not for the first time, a peculiar smell which was like a mixture of tobacco and spirits.

Having dressed himself, he knocked at the door of the adjoining room, and getting no answer, passed in.

There was no one in the room. A kettle was simmering on the fire, and a basin of milk, set to "cream," stood beside it. The cloth was laid for breakfast, and the whole had a pleasant look of rough comfort. The door was locked, so that he was virtually a prisoner. This amused him, and he sat down to wait for the appearance of one of the women. After a minute or two he heard the key turn, and the elder woman entered. She had some fish in her hand, and smiled at him gravely.

(To be Continued.)

One in a Thousand, BUT TRUE TO THE LAST

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Oh, Adrian!" I say, reproachfully as I comprehend his meaning; then I draw myself away, and try to push him from me, for I am terribly hurt.

It is a different sort of pain from that which has been consuming me so long; but the sting is sharper and infinitely more bitter. Although I have felt the same pang once before, that time when Adrian said, jokingly—no, not jokingly, but in real earnest—that Col. Cardyion would be so very disappointed to find me out when he called, the keen agony strikes deep into the very lowest recesses of my heart.

I think he sees how cruelly hurt I am; for he accepts my push meekly, and sits on the edge of the bed, looking thoughtfully into the fire, one hand pulling at his mustache, the other lying just as I dropped it. I lie watching him, with sad eyes, my sting, my one love. I cannot let him go again, no matter how he has wronged me, no matter how he has pained me. And there is another thing—I am not going to let her grace the duchess of Ideminstre who is to be think any longer that he is her slave, separated from me because of his passion for her, so I put my hand softly, almost timidly, into his self-closed one, and draw it back to me.

"Never mind," I say, bravely; "we will not say any more about it, and we will not think any more about it, which is infinitely more to the purpose."

But Adrian does not answer for ever so long—he only keeps his face hidden against my arm. I have a kind of feeling that he is crying, and I am sure I hope he is not; I shall be so horribly inclined to laugh; and I want all these heroes over and done with, for I am not very strong, and I am so tired.

"Adrian," I say, gently.
"Don't scold me, baby," he says humbly.

"But I want to tell you something," I answer; "and I wish you would sit up, for you are very heavy." Whereupon, reluctantly, and with a vexed sigh, he does my bidding. "Do you know that you have never once looked at my baby?" I remark.

"Your baby!" he laughs. I am glad he is his old, laughing self once more; it pains me so to see him humiliated and generally at a disadvantage. "Well, of all the cool audacity I ever heard of, that's about the greatest!"

"Oh, well, your baby," I say; "our baby, if you like it better!"
"Infinitely," he answers.

"Well, you haven't taken any notice of him."
"Haven't I? Well, no, poor, little beggar; you see, his mother's of so much more importance and value."

"Won't you look at him?" I say, fretfully.

"Yes, my darling, of course." Then, after a long pause: "Isn't he uncommonly small?"

(To be Continued.)

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"Nurse says he is the finest child she ever saw!" I cry, indignantly. "But what can one expect you to know about babies?"

"Exactly," he says, easily; "I should think just about as much as you do."

At this moment "daddy" comes in quietly.

"Nurse is raving like a lunatic at the foot of the stairs, and Lane is keeping, guard half way up, like a dragon, so you'd better come down with me, young man!"

"Good girl!" says Adrian, coolly. "She knew what a battle I was likely to have up here."

I am amused to see that he is not in the smallest degree abashed by the awkwardness of having just terminated a five months' separation.

"Seriously, though," says my father, "it is time for you to be turned out; so come along."

When my father has left the room, and Adrian has reached the door, I call him back.

"Well, what do you want?" he says, nothing loath to remain.

"I draw his head down to mine and kiss him."

"Darling," I say, softly, "we will never have any row again."

"No; I think you've done pretty well in that way; not but what it perhaps isn't such a bad plan to condense them all into one lump, and not spread them over a long course of years in the shape of nagging."

"Are you coming back to-night?" I say, wistfully; for, though I have kept him at bay so long, I am terribly greedy of his society now.

"Of course, if that old goddess downstairs doesn't barricade the door, which is not at all improbable."

I laugh at the idea, and at last he sees away. Now, surely, I am quite happy!

(To be Continued.)

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