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For Love of a Woman;
OR,
New Romeo and Juliet.

CHAPTER XI.
LOVE'S SUBTLE SPELL.
"Jeffrey!" she murmured. "Ah, yes!"
"Yes," said Lord Neville. Now, I value his good-will quite as much as I do my uncle's, and I don't feel at all sure that I shall get it. You see, with all deference to you, sweetheart—
Sweetheart! She whispered the word to herself and glowed over it.
"I'm not, in all points, the very best kind of young man for a husband, and your guardian is very likely to remark it. What if he should refuse his consent?"
Her face grew faintly troubled.
Jeffrey refused? she said, almost to herself. "No—no. Not if—"
"Not if you wished for it very much?" he said, divining her meaning.
"I see! And I'm not surprised. I can't imagine any man so-toy-hearted enough to refuse you anything, even such an unwise thing as this! Look here, Doris, I'll go back home with you and see him."
"The trouble on her face grew more marked."
"I hate suspense and delay, and—well, I want to feel sure, quite sure, that you are my very own. You don't mind my going home with you and telling him straight out do you?"
She was silent a moment; then she looked at him hesitatingly.
"No, do not. I— She stopped. "I think I would rather see him first. I—I could tell him. Ah! do you not see how suddenly it would come upon him? How unprepared—"
He nodded.
"You haven't told him anything about me?"
The colour rose to her face.
"No," she said, and her eyes were downcast. "No, I have not told him; he would be so surprised and— will see him first and tell him."
"All right," he said. "Then, to-morrow—"
"Yes, to-morrow," she said, with a little sigh of relief. "I wish I could tell you all he has been to me, how tender and loving—father, mother, brother! Ah! I have had no one else

but him in the world, and he has devoted all his life to me!"
"I will never forget that," said Lord Neville, gravely, "and I will try and thank him to-morrow. Yes, I can understand how hard it will seem to him to have to lose you. But, Doris, he need not do that. He has stood in a father's place to you. I shall not oust him from it, or separate you from him. There is room in that big heart of yours for both of us, isn't there?"
She turned to him as if moved by an irresistible impulse, and held out her hands, and her eyes were full of tears.
"If I had not loved you until this moment, I should now," she said, in a low voice.
Of course he captured the little, quivering hands, and they sat in silence for a minute or two. Then suddenly she started.
"The time!" she exclaimed. "I had forgotten! There is a rehearsal!" and she sprang to her feet. "No, no, pressing her fingers on his shoulder. "You must not move away—not an inch of the way. I—I want to be alone to think—to think!"
She stopped, with a little, dazed air and smiled down at him.
"Oh, if you are tired of me—" he said, with a loving mockery. "To-morrow, Doris, in the morning?"
"Yes, to-morrow. Ah! what a long time!" she whimpered, almost inaudibly. "Let me think. If I cannot come—there may be a rehearsal—"
He looked disappointed—man-like.
"I shall be here," he said, "and I'll wait all day if you like."
She laughed softly, her eyes dwelling upon him lovingly.
"Without your lunch or your dinner? That would be too much. No, if you come and I am not here, leave some message for me," she looked round. "Write me a word, and put it under this big stone by the tree there."
"All right," he said. "But you will come, if not in the morning, in the afternoon—some time! Remember, I want to see your guardian to-morrow!"
"Yes," she said. "But do you remember, Lord Neville—that I belong to the public?"
"Indeed, Miss Marlowe?" he said, retorting the formality upon her. "I was under the impression that you belonged to me."
"Ah, yes," she murmured, with sweet surrender, as he held her in his arms. "We've forgotten one part of the ceremony," he said. "People, when they are engaged, give each other a ring. I wasn't conceited enough to think you'd listen to me, or I would have brought one."
"Have mine," she said. Then, suddenly, she disengaged her hand and held it up, and swiftly drew from her finger a quaint old silver ring. "See?" she said, the colour stealing into her face. "Will you have that?"
"Will I?" he said, taking it, hand and all.
"What a small hand you have," she said, laughing softly. "It is too large for your little finger. You had better give it back to me."
"It will be a bad day for me when I do," he said, grimly, "for I shall be limp and cold."
"Or faithless," she said, with a smile.
Then, before he could retort, she touched his lips with hers, murmured his name, and was gone.
He watched her until the slight, girlish figure had vanished, then went slowly to his horse, mounted, and rode slowly away.
A minute or so afterwards a lady and gentleman came out from among the trees. The gentleman was Spencer Churchill, the lady—Lady Grace.

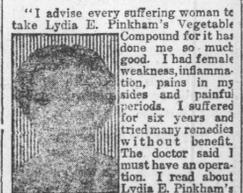
He wore his usual bland, benevolent smile, intensified, if anything, as he looked after the disappearing horseman; but Lady Grace was white almost to pallor, and stood, biting her under-lip and breathing heavily.
"What a charming pastoral!" he said, with his smooth, oily laugh. "Adam and Eve or Edwin and Angelina in Goldsmith's poem—you know it dear Lady Grace?—were never more poetical or touching. Really, one cannot help feeling grateful to the happy chance which enabled me to be a witness of so moving and charming a scene."
"Chance!" she said, and her voice sounded thick and forced. "You know that they would be here when you asked me? And not having the inestimable privilege of knowing the lady—"
"She is an actress—the girl you saw last night!" she murmured, between her teeth. "An actress—painted—"
Was she painted? Yes, I dare say I am, alas! rather near-sighted," he said, smiling as he recalled the youthful bloom of Doris's sweet face. "Ah! yes, I daresay! But perhaps our dear Cecil is near-sighted, too. At any rate, he seems very—ah—very far gone, does he not?"
"He is mad!" she almost hissed.
"You think, then, that he—ah—means this quite seriously? You know so much more of the world than I, dear Lady—you think he would marry this interesting young creature?"
A light of hateful hope—such a light as shamed her womanhood—flashed for a moment in Lady Grace's eyes; then, as it died out, she said, moodily, scornfully.
"Oh, yes, he is mad enough for that! Oh, yes, he would—even marry her!"
"In-deed! Really? How charming! So romantic!" pursued Spencer Churchill. "The future Marchioness of Stoyle an actress, a provincial actress! Clever! oh, certainly; and beautiful!—ahem!—well, with her paint and powder, of course; but provincial, quite! And the future marchioness! Let me see, when was the marquise created?"
His smooth, suave speech almost frenzied her.
"Why do you exasperate me?" she exclaimed, between her teeth, and turning upon him. "Why have you brought me here? To laugh at me, to

mock me with this—this scandalous scene? You know he will marry her, unless—"
"Unless?" he said, softly. "Unless an accident happens. And accidents do happen—alas!—so often in this unsatisfactory, disappointed world."
She watched his face eagerly, with a faint blimmer of hope on her face, which was still pale and eloquent of the fierce jealousy which racked and tore her.
"What do you mean?" she demanded, half-angry, half-pleadingly.
He smiled unctuously.
"Twist the cup and the lip." The old, old adage, dear Lady Grace. Those young people, in the full flush of their mutual passion—
She bit her lip till two red spots showed where the white, even teeth had pressed.
"Doubtless think that their path to happiness is quite plain and smooth. Alas! I fear they will find that the road is stony and difficult. It is a pity, a thousand pities! It is so sweet to see two hearts that beat as one—"
"Cease!" she said, as if she could endure his soft, mocking voice no longer. "What will you do? What can you do? He is mad and—headstrong. How can you prevent—"
She stopped suddenly and, stooping, picked up something from the grass.
"Ah!" he said. "Treasure-trove! What is it? A broken sixpence? No! A ring—the ring!"
She held it almost at arm's-length, as if it were some noxious reptile, then with a gesture of scorn and hate, she raised her hand as if to throw the ring from her; but instantly he seized her arm and his soft, fat hand slid down until it had reached and secured the ring.
"Dear me, dear me!" he murmured, as he held it up. "How sorry he will be! How— He stopped suddenly, ring; then, as he became aware of and his eyes seemed riveted to the Lady Grace's fixed gaze, the benevolent returned to his face. "Actually lost it a few minutes after she had given it to him! Now, some superstitious persons would call that a bad omen. Are you superstitious, dear Lady?"
"Give it to me. Let me throw it—"
She said, with malignant intensity.
He held it out of her reach, surveying her with smiling scrutiny.
"No, really, you must not. Poor Cecil—"
He stopped suddenly, and the expression of his face changed. His quick ears had caught the sound of a horse's hoofs.
Touching her arms, he signed to her to follow him, and slid back behind the trees. She followed him, and, looking over her shoulder, saw Lord Cecil galloping towards them.
He cleared the hedge, and, dropping from the horse, walked quickly to the spot where they had stood, and commenced to search in the grass with anxious eagerness. He went down on his knee and examined every inch of the spot where Doris and he had sat, groped along the bank where they had stood, and hurried every likely spot.
They could see his anxious face, hear his half-muttered ejaculations of disappointment, and Spencer Churchill, with the ring in his hand, smiled sweetly.
(To be Continued.)

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