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'The is Die Cast For Better or For Worse.'

CHAPTER XVII.
A Lion of Society.

Eva went to some friends at the other end of the room and was chatting with them, when she was aware of a sudden cessation of talk, of stillness, which, by experience, she knew proclaimed the advent of the celebrity of the evening. She glanced toward the door and saw a tall, a very tall man, standing there talking to her aunt, who was receiving him with empressment. He was a good-looking, strongly built man with a tanned face and blue eyes—they looked startlingly blue in their tanned surroundings. He wore a very short beard cut to a point; and something about his strongly marked face, the directness of his look, the self-possessed attitude of his figure, as if he were knit up for any emergency, differentiated from the other men in the room who seemed ordinary by comparison with him. Eva thought he looked rather bored already, and he glanced at the door, through which he had only just entered, as if he were already meditating escape.

Eva heard her aunt say: "The collection is in the other room, Mr. Osborne;" and as Lady Lorchester took him there, she introduced him to any one who happened to be near. The great celebrity looked still more bored as he passed into the other room. Aunt Emily fluttered over to Eva.

"My dear," she said excitedly, "come with me and show him the arrowheads. I'm afraid he'll run off. He is so difficult, so—so anxious to get away."

Much amused, Eva accompanied her aunt to the room where the collection was displayed. The captured lion turned as she entered, muttered something, and seemed about to pass them, probably meditating flight; then he looked at Eva again, and hesitated.

"I have come to show you the arrowheads or whatever they are," said Eva. "I am Lady Lorchester's niece," she added, for in her perturbation Lady Lorchester had retreated to the drawing-room.

The great traveller frowned at her. "What do you know about them?" he inquired rather brusquely.

"Nothing whatever," said Eva.

He looked at her steadily, and his frown melted into a smile of amusement.

"There is nothing much to know

about them," he said. "They are by no means extraordinary; you could buy most of 'em in Museum Street. So you are Lady Lorchester's niece? What is your name? Why didn't she introduce us?"

Repressing her desire to laugh, Eva told him her name. And he regarded her steadily, as if she were a specimen more interesting than those by which he had been beguiled by Lady Lorchester.

"Let's sit down," he said suddenly. "It's quieter here away from that mob in the other room. How I hate mobs of that kind! What on earth can you find amusing in it!"

"The proper study of Mankind is Man," Eva reminded him.

"Not that kind of man; it's not worth studying," he retorted. "They are always as alike as peas."

"There are some small peas in the pod," said Eva.

"These are all small," he said. "Do you mean to tell me you like coming to parties of this kind?"

"Yes," said Eva gravely. "Some of these people are my friends. Don't abuse them, please."

"Sorry," he said, but not very penitently. "I should have thought you were above this kind of thing."

"I suppose you intend to be complimentary," said Eva with a smile. "But why should I be above it?"

He passed his hand over his beard and almost scowled at her.

"I was judging by your face," he said. "Oh, I don't mean to be offensive." Eva had colored slightly. "I have had to judge by faces for many a year, and you get pretty smart at it after a time, especially when, in so many cases, your life depends upon your making up your mind whether the man you're talking to is going to hold out his hand empty or with a weapon of offence in it."

"I am not the least bit offended," said Eva; "and I suppose you know by this time that I am not going to stab or shoot you?"

"No; I don't suppose you'd do that, unless you were driven to it," he said.

"Thank you," said Eva. "And now, won't you tell me something about your travels?"

He recoiled with something like an expression of horror.

"Good Lord, no!" he exclaimed. "What have you ever done to me that I should inflict you so badly?"

"But I should be very much interested," pleaded Eva. "You have been to some extraordinary places and done some wonderful things."

"Oh, don't!" he said with something like a groan. "Don't disappoint me. I expected something very different from you. Everybody asks me that question. It's a kind of duty; and if I don't bore them to death, they look and speak as if I'd defrauded them of their just due. Hold on!" For Eva

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had opened her lips to assure him that she was just as curious as the rest of the world, and that she wouldn't be bored. "If you want to know anything about what I've done—and I give you my word of honor that it's nothing wonderful—come and hear me read a paper next Thursday at the British Institution."

"Thank you. I will come," said Eva.

"I will send you a ticket," he said, and he wrote down her address on his shirt-cuff. "I hate reading papers, lecturing; I hate talking in any kind of public. I can't see what there is to make a fuss about in anything I've done. I did it to amuse myself, and I shouldn't have done it if I hadn't liked it. Just at present I'm a great deal more interested in London, the sights and shows and all that kind of thing. I'm like a boy let loose from school, for a holiday, a spree."

"I love London!" said Eva.

They began to talk about the great city which is as fascinating as a beautiful, mysterious, Sphinx-like woman; they compared notes; they talked of Dickens' London, of Thackeray's; they gloried in the parks, the old, historic houses. Insensibly Eva spoke of her life in the country gradually he was drawn, notwithstanding his real reluctance, into speaking of the unknown lands into which he had penetrated. They sat side by side on a comfortable ottoman, and they looked at each other eye to eye; Eva began to feel as if they were old friends; and it was no difficult because, notwithstanding his vast experience of many lands and many peoples, the great traveler was as simple-hearted and as transparent as a child; perhaps that was the reason of his success. They forgot all about "the mob" in the other room but Aunt Emily had not forgotten the latest lion, and presently she came in with an inundation of persons who were dying to be introduced to the famous Owen Osborne.

His manner changed instantly; he became almost sullen, looked at his watch, muttered something, and was striding to the door; then he seemed to remember Eva, and he came back to her.

"I'd like to know what you think of that paper," he said. "Shall I call on you, or have you seen enough of me?"

"Oh, call," said Eva, laughing.

He nodded and was making his way unceremoniously through the group surrounding them when the footman announced Lord Herndale. Owen Osborne stopped and knit his brows.

"Herndale!" he said, as if he were trying to remember something. "Herndale? I seem to remember the name. I think I've met him somewhere, but I can't recollect when or where."

He was looking at Eva absently, and she glanced in the direction of Lord Herndale, who was shaking hands with Lady Lorchester at the entrance to the other room. Owen Osborne peered over the heads of the people then shrugged his shoulders.

"That isn't the man I knew," he said. "I must be mistaken, Good night. Don't forget—Thursday."

Eva condescended to be lionized; then drove home, and thought a good deal about him on the way. She liked him. She had not met any one whom she liked so much since—since Mr. Lashmore. For some time Harry Lashmore had naturally occupied a prominent place in her mind; but Eva was a high-minded girl and she succeeded in thrusting Lashmore into the back-ground. She might have loved him very dearly, but his conduct had been inexplicable; he had gone off without making any sign, any attempt to explain his conduct, to retain her good will.

There may be some women who would not only condone such conduct, but cling to the man all the closer for his ill treatment; but Eva was not one of them. Yes, certainly she liked Mr. Osborne, and she intended going to hear his lecture.

Her father was sitting up for her in what was called the library; she came in softly and found him sitting at the table in a dejected attitude, his head resting on his hand. He looked up with a start as she entered, and hastily thrust aside a sheet of paper over which he had been bending.

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she was shocked by his attitude and her weariness and dejection of his face; and she went to him and put her arm round his shoulder.

"Oh, what is the matter, father?" she asked anxiously. "You look so worried and tired."

"Nothing, nothing, my dear," he said hurriedly. "I have just been going through some accounts. Have you had a pleasant evening?"

"Oh, yes," she said, with a laugh. "But I'm afraid Aunt Emily hasn't; and I'm sorry for her, because I love her. She is the dearest, sweetest aunt in all the world. It was about a lion who turned rusty."

She told him about the great traveler and latest hero; but Sir Talbot listened rather inattentively.

"Was Lord Herndale there?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," said Eva. "I only saw him for a minute or two, for I was talking so much with Mr. Owen Osborne. Lord Herndale came out to the carriage with me, as usual; and, by the way, he asked me to tell you that he would be round to-morrow morning."

Sir Talbot nodded and checked a sigh.

(To be Continued.)

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