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THE Phantom Lover.

(By the Author of "A Bachelor Husband.")

CHAPTER IX.

Ether climbed the stairs of the agency again the following morning. There was a little feeling of despondency in her heart. She had slept badly, and she had not been able to forget what June had said about Ashton. Ether was influenced by June's "instincts," as she chose to call them; she knew it was foolish, but the fact remained all the same.

When she opened the waiting-room door she felt half inclined to turn and go away again. She would only meet with the same answer: "Nothing that will suit you to-day, Miss Shepstone." But for a wonder the room was almost empty, and the tall and stately one was standing at the communicating door.

When she saw Esther she came forward. "I was hoping you would call, Miss Shepstone. Will you come into my room?"

Esther's heart leapt. She obeyed eagerly.

A lady was sitting at the table looking rather bored and irritated.

She was grey-haired and handsome, and most beautifully dressed. She turned slightly when Esther entered, and stared at her through tortoiseshell glasses.

"Is this—the young lady?" she asked.

"Yes, madam—this is Miss Shepstone." The stately one introduced Esther with a wave of her hand. "This lady, Miss Shepstone, is looking for a companion. Some one who can work well—and read aloud." She looked at Esther sharply. "Can you read aloud?" she asked.

Esther stammered out that she supposed she could, but . . .

"That is a minor detail," the lady with the tortoiseshell glasses interrupted. "Write and tell me what you decide to do. Here is my card . . ." She took one from a heavy silver case and laid it on the table. She looked at Esther quizzically, then suddenly she held out her hand.

"Good-bye, Miss Shepstone. I hope I shall see you again," and the next moment she had gone.

The stiff and stately owner of the agency was smiling, well pleased.

"You are most fortunate, Miss Shepstone," she said. "You have secured one of the best posts I have on my books. If you take my advice you will



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not hesitate. Make up your mind at once."

Ether did not answer. She took up the card from the table, then she drew in her breath with a hard sound, for the name printed there was Mrs. Raymond Ashton.

CHAPTER XI.

Ether never knew how she got out into the street. She walked along like some one in a dream; her cheeks were burning hot.

Mrs. Raymond Ashton! Raymond's mother! The woman of whom he had spoken so often and so bitterly. The woman who had raised such a fierce objection to her marriage with Raymond.

There was not much resemblance between mother and son; they were both handsome, but there was a sort of humour in Mrs. Ashton's face which Raymond lacked. Ether tried vainly to find some likeness between them.

She realised how different this woman was to what she had pictured her, remembered that spontaneously offered hand. Had Mrs. Ashton known who she was? Oh, surely not, or she would never have appeared so anxious to engage her.

How angry Raymond would be. Angry that the woman he loved was to go to his mother as a paid companion. Ether could not help smiling. For her own sake she would not mind it. At least she would be with his mother and in his home; but, of course, the thing was impossible—such a situation would not be tolerable. She would have to write and refuse.

"Good afternoon!" said a voice, and turning hurriedly, Ether found Micky Mellows beside her.

He looked as if he were not quite sure of his reception; but to-day Ether had other thoughts to occupy her which were more interesting than he was—and the smile she gave him was almost friendly.

"Good afternoon! Isn't it cold?"

"Very . . . Where are you hurrying off to?"

He tried to speak casually, but his heart was beating uncomfortably. "I'm just going back home," Esther said. "I've been to an agency looking for a berth."

"A berth!" A frown came between his eyes. "What sort of a berth?" he asked quickly.

Esther laughed.

"Well, I'm thinking of taking your advice—and going as companion to an old lady—not that she's very old," she added doubtfully, with sudden memory of Raymond's mother.

"You mean that you have decided?"

She hesitated.

"Well, I have the refusal of it," she looked at him with defiant eyes. "I am only just hesitating—I want to talk to Miss Mason about it—she is much more worldly wise than I am."

"June is a very sensible woman," he said. "I am glad you like her." He hesitated. "And the—er—post?" he asked with an effort. "Will it be in town?"

"Oh yes."

She was obviously not going to tell him any more, but Micky persevered.

"I wonder if it is likely to be any one I know. I have quite an extensive acquaintance in London."

"Yes," said Esther. "But I don't suppose you will know these people, anyway," she added with an unconscious touch of loftiness in her voice. "The name is Ashton—Mrs. Raymond Ashton."

There was the barest possible allusion before Micky answered, a silence during which the blank dismay and anger that crossed his face would have been amusing had it not also had something of pathos in it.

"Ashton?" he said. "Oh yes, I know Raymond Ashton very well." He was watching her with jealous eyes, and she turned her head sharply and looked up at him.

Just for a moment a traitorous eagerness crossed her face; he could almost see the quick question on her lips, then she laughed.

"Really! How funny! But, of course, as you say, you must know a great many people."

"I have known the Ashtons for years. You will like Mrs. Ashton." There was a sort of quiet insinuation in the words, and Esther bit her lip.

"And—the son?" she asked. "I think you said you knew the son."

"Yes, I know him—he is in Paris, I believe."

Micky was conscious of a queer tightening about his throat; it was a tremendous effort to force himself to speak lightly.

"And shall I like him as well, do you think?" Esther asked deliberately. Micky did not answer.

"Do you like him?" she persisted.

Micky's restraint broke. His bonds; if he had died for it he could not have checked the words that rushed to his lips.

"I detest the fellow!" he said. "He's a beastly outsider!"

He dared not look at her. He held his breath, waiting for the storm to break, but if he had lost his self-control she kept hers admirably.

"Really," she said. Her voice was a little breathless, but quite calm. "What does a man mean when he calls another man—such a name?"

Her face was quite colourless, even to the lips, and her hands were clenched in the shabbiness of the cheap little muff she carried.

He blunderingly tried to make amends.

"I ought not to have said that, just

because he's not the sort of man I care about," he said stammeringly. "He's of quite all right—it all depends from what point of view you regard him. I hope you will forget that I said that, Miss Shepstone. It—it was unparliamentary."

"It's a matter of complete indifference to me what you say about—Mr. Ashton," she told him.

She stopped. They had been walking along together.

"Which way are you going?" she asked.

Micky flushed up to the eyes; he knew this was a dismissal.

"I was coming along to see June," he said. "I hoped you would allow me to walk along with you—if I am not intruding."

Esther forced a smile, but her lips felt stiff.

"Oh, but I am not going back," she said. Her voice sounded as if it were cut in ice. "So I won't detain you. Good-bye."

She turned and left him, walking quickly away again in the direction from which she had just come.

Her eyes were smarting with tears that had to be restrained.

"How dare he—oh, how dare he!" she asked herself passionately. "What does he know about Raymond?"

She could not trust herself to go back home. She walked about in the cold till she was tired out. She wanted to be sure that Micky would have left Elphinstone Road before she got there. She wondered if June knew the Ashton too. She probably did, as Micky Mellows knew them. They were both of Raymond's own world, these two.

It was only she, who loved him best, who was outside the magic circle of his friends.

It was nearly supper time when she got in. She paused for a moment in the hall and looked anxiously at the rows of coats and hats hanging there. She thought she would know Micky's if she saw them there. She forgot that he might have taken them up to June's room. She turned away with a little sigh.

At the foot of the stairs she met young Harley. He coloured sensitively when he saw her and stood aside for her to pass.

Esther flushed too. She wondered if what he thought of her note refusing the theatre. With sudden impulse she spoke—

"I hope you are not angry with me, Mr. Harley, but—perhaps you do not know that I am engaged to be married, and so . . . so I don't think I should accept invitations from any one else, though—though it was kind of you to ask me," she added.

(To be continued.)

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After-Dinner Stories.

At a brilliant dinner in Washington the guests of honor were leading Englishmen and leading Frenchmen. Mr. Everts, Secretary of State, presided with one of them on his right and the other on his left, and began his post-prandial talk by observing that it was a nice question whether the Englishman or the Frenchman was named to be the pick of humanity. "As for me," he added, glancing from right to left as he spoke, "I prefer something between the two."

At a dinner to Bishop Potter, several other distinguished men answering to the name of Potter were present. This fact prompted Mr. Everts to tell the company of a dazed clergyman who put up the petition: "Oh, Lord, let us never forget that Thou art the clay and we are the Potters."

Among the guests at a Washington dinner at which he was present was an eminent scientist. Late in the evening Mr. Everts suddenly attracted general attention by saying to the scientist, "Professor, I should like to ask you a question. Why is it that the liquid at the bottom of a bottle is more intoxicating than the liquor at the top?"

The scientist, all unconscious of the fun lurking in the question, replied: "Why, I have never had my attention called to the fact." "Yes," rejoined Everts, with a perfectly grave face, while the rest of the company broke into a burst of laughter. "I know men who have frequently found by actual experience that it is so."

His sly dig at President Hayes's temperance principles is still one of the favourite stories in Washington. "While Hayes occupied the White House," said Everts, "the water at his dinners flowed like champagne."

Fashion Plates.

A PRACTICAL "EASY TO MAKE" APRON.



Pattern 3497 is here depicted. It is cut in 4 Sizes: Small, 32-34; Medium, 36-38; Large, 40-42; Extra Large, 44-46 inches bust measure. A Medium size requires 4 1/2 yards of 36 inch material.

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Cure for Marital Differences.

In Swabia there was a curious custom aimed at reviving harmony in troubled homes. Whenever a married couple, declaring incompatibility of temperament, seek divorce, instead of appealing for conciliation to a magistrate who may or may not be a psychologist and may or may not be possessed with persuasive eloquence, the authorities shut up husband and wife in a tower, allowing them only one fork and one plate between them. The result of the experiment is then patiently awaited. If the story goes that a nine hours out of ten, at the end of a few hours of this inconvenient regime, the two are released from the tower perfectly reconciled. Material necessities have drawn them together and effaced the sentimental misunderstandings. And they return happily to their dwelling to breakfast more comfortably in the peace of the reconstituted home, whose imperfections they no longer perceive.

Household Notes.

Add diced bacon to your omelet mixture.

Stuff apples with marshmallows and bake.

Prunes are excellent stewed with raisins.

Never fail to strain white sauce if it is not smooth.

For flavor add a little grated lemon rind to baker rhubarb.

Rhubarb punch made with lemons and pineapple juice is delicious.

Roast duckling is excellent stuffed with apples and seedless raisins.

Long cooking is the secret of success in preparing uncooked cereals.

Left-over spinach and mashed potatoes make delicious croquettes.

Sweetbreads are delicious cooked in butter and served on fresh toast.

Add 1/2 cupful of cocoa to rice pudding. This makes a nice change.

When making oyster stew, cook the oysters only until their edges ruffe.

A pinch of sugar added to the sauce of cheese fritters improves the flavor.

Irons keep hot a long time if kept on the soapstone radiator of the fireless cooker.

Guinea should be served with a sauce flavored with orange or pineapple juice.

If you wish your white sauce to be thick, double the quantity of butter and flour.

A salad which men particularly like is made of chopped apples, celery and walnuts.

A good brush for plugh and velvet hats is a small velvet pad loosely filled with sawdust.

Plain jelly roll may be made into a delicious dessert if sliced and served with whipped cream.

Oysters and oyster liquor add a savory taste to tomato bouillon. Boil after adding the oysters.

U. S. Resurrectionists.

In order to prevent grave robbers exhuming the body of Senator John Keen (New Jersey), and holding it for ransom, a guard was placed over the grave. Word was brought to the police that body-snatchers were at work in the cemetery. Half a dozen patrolmen reached the cemetery just about midnight, and found that they had scared away the ghosts just as they were about to break through the concrete in which the coffin is set, having dug down through the frozen earth to that distance, Julian P. Keen, President of the National State Bank, a brother of the late Senator Keen, said that he could think of no motive for the vandalism unless the grave robbers intended to hold his brother's body for ransom.

Halifax, N.S.

Minard's Liniment Co., Ltd. Gentlemen—I have used Minard's Liniment and have found it a good remedy. After the explosion I was pretty well shaken up having quite a number of bruises and cuts, but thanks to Minard's Liniment I am my old self again. It healed the sores and bruises and gave me much relief. It is true to its name as the King of Pain, for it stopped the pain almost at once. I first noticed the ad in the Montreal Standard and decided to invest in a bottle, for which I am not sorry, but can say with truth that I am thankful for it having done all it claimed to do, and in my case much more, and a satisfied customer is the best ad. one can possibly find. That is my view of it and I think you will agree with me too.

Yours very truly
(Signed) ALFRED BLAIN,
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