



The Countess of London.

CHAPTER XIV.

A murmur, half of surprise, half of disappointment, ran through the gynaeceum, but it neither cowed nor embarrassed her. She drew herself up to her full height and looked round from face to face with an air which startled—absolutely startled—Royce.

"He shall not!" she said in a low voice that, low as it was, seemed to ring like a bell. "I am mistress here, and I say that it shall not be!" She turned her eyes upon Royce for a moment—a moment only; then they fell as she said, "Go back to the horses."

Royce stood with his feet on the step, hesitating for an instant, then he raised his cap and strode away.

All the gynaeceum remained silent until Madge had also disappeared; then Steve, still standing on the platform, said, with an oath:

"She's afraid he might be hurt, you see."

She heard the malignant, taunting words, though she had reached the edge of the crowd, and she pressed her hand to her bosom, and her eyes closed for a moment, for she knew, right down in her heart, that the jealous haunt was partly true. She drew her hand over her face and made her way back to her van, trembling and quivering now that the moment of excitement which had sustained her had passed, and leaned against the wheel. Then she started, and would have fled for refuge in the van, for she heard a step close beside her, and did not need to look up to learn that it was Royce.

He came up and took her hand. "Thank you, Madge," he said, very faintly and gravely. "It was right down good of you, but—but was it worth while to upset them for the sake of saving me a little annoyance? That sounds ungrateful, I know," he went on, as she did not answer; "but I'm grateful enough if you could see into my heart. Thank you, Madge—dear

Madge," and he laid his other hand on hers and held it imprisoned for a moment.

She forced herself to speak calmly. "It—it was a drunken whim of Uncle Jake," she said; "the others would not have thought of it—excepting Steve."

"Ah, Steve!" he said, with a smile. "Never mind, Madge; don't let it upset you. You see, they obeyed the word of command, just as I did. And it went against the grain a little, too, for I should have shown them that I meant to take the rough with the smooth, and that I wasn't too proud."

She looked up at him. "You do enough as it is," she said; and her voice had nothing of its late tone of command. "You—you shall not do that. I forbid it. You—you—a faint, sad smile, as if in mockery of her words, crossed her face—"you will obey me?"

"Of course I will," he said. "I'd obey you, Madge, if you told me to climb the greasy pole or tumble in the ring."

She wrung her hands together. "It's all wrong, wrong!" she moaned. "Ah, if you would only leave us—if you would only go!"

"I can't leave you, Madge," he said, gently; "but I'll go—back to the horses. There; don't think any more of it, and don't stick me on a pedestal—I'm not worth it."

He pressed her hand in his as he spoke, and then went off. As he did so, Uncle Jake came round the van.

"Hahn! we better strike camp and be off!" he said in a kind of tipsy defiance. "Seems to me we're all getting too ornamental to be of much use. Have you packed him up in lavender and cotton wool?"

She turned upon him with sudden passion, then she seemed to check herself.

"You mean that I, am doing nothing?" she said, almost meekly. "Do you think I am too ornamental, that I care about myself, that I am afraid to work? You can not mean him. Not one of you work harder than he does—not one. But—but he shall not go on the platform while I can prevent it. He is not like us—he is a gentleman."

She did not finish the sentence, but started away from him and mingled with the crowd.

Royce went back to the sale-ring with a curious sensation at his heart. Her lovely face, made noble by its expression of dignity and command, floated before him in an instant, then melted into the same face as it had looked when he held her hands.

"Dear Madge," he murmured, "could the highest born lady in the land have understood more clearly or acted more bravely? God bless her! I wish I could have thanked her as I wanted to. But I am such an idiot when I try to put a couple of sentences together."

He did not know that the grasp of his hand, the light in his eyes, had supplied the eloquence which his words had lacked, or that Madge, as she

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made her way through the crowd, was repeating them to herself over, and over again, and that they drowned the roar of the people and the din of the fair.

He stood beside his horses till the afternoon grew into evening, and it was too dark for any more buyers; then he tethered them for the night and took a walk through the fair. He stopped and looked at the booths and the stalls, but Madge's face still floated before him and got between him and the staring naphtha lights; and it seemed to him that he was moving in a dream—a dream of Cumberleigh Fair—when he suddenly heard a voice say:

"Shall I tell your fortunes?"

He swung round quickly and saw Madge herself moving through the crowd near him, her shawl round her head, her small brown hand outstretched.

The blood rushed to his face, and a great indignation and repugnance seized hold of him. It was—yes, it was almost as if he had seen—and heard Irene herself.

He strode toward her; but the crowd was dense, and her slim form seemed to glide through it, so that he lost her for a moment; then he saw her again, and pushed and elbowed his way in her direction.

He had almost reached her when a man dressed like a groom out of livery stopped in front of her, and holding out his hand, said something.

Madge apparently did not hear, for she was moving on, when the man took hold of her arm. She stopped and shrank back, just as she had shrank back when Royce himself had touched her at Cumberleigh. The man laughed, but the next instant the laugh gave place to a howl of pain, for Royce had seized his arm, and with a twist like that of a blacksmith's pincers had forced him to drop his hold.

The man started back, rubbing his arm, and began to swear; then suddenly he stopped, and his mouth opened and shut like a newly caught cod, and he stared with a troubled and amazed look in his eyes.

"Why—why, it's—yes, I'm danged if it isn't Master Royce!" he gasped.

Royce did not hear him, had scarcely glanced at him, and if he had would not have recognized one of the Monk Towers servants; for the instant the man had released Madge, Royce had drawn her out of the crowd, and still holding her, looked down at her with earnest eyes and tightly shut lips.

"You—you mustn't do that, Madge," he said, almost under his breath.

She looked up at him, then stood downcast, her lips tremulous.

"I—you forget," she said, almost indignantly, "it is my business, it is my work."

"No," he said, sternly. "It is my turn now." As he spoke, he drew her behind the vans into a spot comparatively quiet and out of the glare of the lights. He did not say "to command," but she understood him, and she did not resist.

"You must not do it again, Madge," he said, still walking on and leading her by the hand. "You must not do it; hear? There are plenty of other women and girls in the camp who do not mind it—who like it. But you hate it. But you hate it—you said so—and I hate it, too. Surely our queen ought not to lower herself."

(To be continued)

The Ideal Dance Floor

In a big new dance club which is projected the dance floor is to be of ebony—the first of its kind. It will be amazingly decorative, but its qualities for dancing have yet to be tested.

The perfect dance floor is a problem. Engineers and timber experts, investigating and experimenting, have produced some curiously complex and original structures for the ball-rooms of this country and the United States.

The nearest approach to the ideal I know at present is laid in a London hotel. It is made up of nearly 10,000 small pieces of Balkan oak, seasoned for ten years and given resiliency, toughness and imperviousness to atmospheric changes by a lengthy baking process.

Smoothness of surface was attained by pressing with electric irons, and the necessary spring is imparted by a suspension system involving the use of thousands of steel springs and wires. Although strong enough to bear 250 tons, its resiliency is retained, and regular "tuning" keeps it sensitive.

The huge floor in another London place has "springs" imparted to it by big spiral springs bedded in concrete and supporting banks on which the floor is laid. But a dancing throng impairs its resiliency.

Floors laid on rubber and felt are comparatively common and they have many disadvantages. Thin floors laid on a yielding foundation are very pleasant to the dancers while they are new, but they soon become worn in patches and may even become splintery.

Parquet floors, lightly polished and laid on a solid foundation, are very tiring after an hour's dancing, although they are not so hard on the feet and leg muscles as the marble floors on which one dances in some fashionable places along the Riviera coast.

Many dance salons have a parquet veneer laid over ordinary floor boards. This again is quite efficient for a while, but atmospheric changes cause shrinking and expansion.

In one club this type of floor was thoughtlessly laid over the kitchen. On the second night of its season members were astounded to see that their floor surface had taken on several "waves."

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Japan Orders World's Largest G. E. Turbine

Generator With Capacity of 50,000 Horsepower Will Light 1,000,000 Homes.

SCHENECTADY, March 2.—The largest single unit turbine generator ever sold by any manufacturer in the world for export has been ordered from the International General Electric Company by Mitsui & Co. for the Toho Electric Power Company of Japan.

This G-E Curtis turbine has a capacity of 50,000 horsepower and will drive a generator which will supply 35,000 kilowatts of electric current at 11,000 volts, enough to light 1,000,000 of the average Japanese homes. With the exception of the motor the machine will be disassembled for shipment. The revolving field of the generator, which is twenty-seven feet long and four feet in diameter, will be made from a single forging and will weigh about fifty tons. This will turn at a speed of 1,800 revolutions per minute.

This order, including accessories and switchboard equipment, represents an initial capital expenditure of more than \$1,000,000. The new unit will be located in the city of Nagoya.

The Toho Company, capitalized at approximately \$70,000,000, practically controls the supply of power for lighting, industrial and railway purposes for a territory of about 13,000 square miles with a population of 10,000,000. This territory is divided into two main districts, Kansai and Kyushu. The former, with its headquarters in the City of Nagoya, is the industrial backbone of Japan, and is located in the central portion of the mainland.

Up until April, 1923, the Toho Company owned forty power plants,

LOWBROW TALK.

I hear men talk so much of books, of art and culture and such things, I find it good to talk with cooks, discuss string beans and their strings. The growth of fiction never stops, our barns and cribs are full of tales. And people talk of silly books as though they were of weight and worth; reviewers, in their allied nooks, discuss all novels on this earth. I've asked a million times a day if I've read this, if I've read that; what do I think of Bertha Clay, and of her book, "The Haunted Hat"? What do I think of Peter Scott? Do I consider Conrad Rne, or think his stories kickless rot? And so I like to talk with cooks, and watch them dally shelling peas, forgetting all the bank of books, and

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