# The Heir?

CHAPTER XXXI.

(Continued.)

"If you don't want me to buy them why didn't you say so?" she remarked, with a touch of shrewishness which she had not hitherto displayed, and which grated on Sidney. It's hard enough to have to live here in a kind of hiding, under an assumed name, as if I wasn't your wife, without being grumbled at about a few pounds spent in buying things that are absolutely necessary to a lady of my position."

She caught a rather ugly look which dawned in his eyes, and changed her tone, as a cunning fox doubles; and rising went to him and put her arms round his neck-her eyes still fixed on the patterns by her plate, by the way-and laid her face against his.

'I am sorry if I have been extravagent, Sidney, dear," she murmured. "You ought to have checked me, dear -you really ought! And now I've gone and ordered three new dresses from Madame Clotilla." She hadn't ordered them yet. "I am afraid it's too late to countermand them. And I was going to ask you for some money this morning-just some pin-money for little things I want. But I won't do it; I'll wait until you come back from London. Oh, dear, how lonely I shall be while you are gone! It's the first time we have been parted, isn't it, Sidney? Shall you feel sorry?"

He made the appropriate response and they kissed each other; but somehow he felt that her kiss was a cold one-all the colder for its affection of warmth; and in his heart he knew that he did not regret the coldness as he would have done a few weeks ago.

He went up to London-she ordered the dresses the moment he was gone -and saw the London agent of the Starborough bankers. He explained to them that he had out-run his allowance, and they readily permitted him to overdraw his account; stipulating, however, that he should pay in the amount overdrawn within a fortnight. He was glad-yes, actually glad-to get away from Rachel to he free for a few hours\_already!\_ and he dined by himself at the Cafe Royal, and afterwards strolled down to the billiard room off the Strand. He had nowhere else to go. The usual company was there, and he played a gae of pool and enjoyed it-actually

ner, after Captain White.

Oh, he hasn't been here lately, replied the man to whom he had put ! is the captain! Sometimes he slopes for years. Mysterious bird! Shouldn't and on her long fingers, and letting have to go on living like this, Sidney? wonder if he's gone abroad again.'

Sidney repressed a shudder and drew a breath of relief. Now and head and yawned. again in his illicit happiness-if happiness it could be called—in the society she said in that tone of patronage, of Rachel, the remembrance of the and almost contempt, which Sidney man and the part he had played flash- was just beginning to notice. 'And ed upon his mind like a haunting have you got the money?" spectre; but he had thrust it away from him, as he did now; for, no his hundred pounds, as he had hinted want the money at once.' that he would do

Sidney went back to Brighton by character of a devoted wife waiting fully, but with a little pout of the red for her husband's return. The French lips. maid pertly informed him that her

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During the progress of the game he absesence, and went to the room in suddenly enquired, in a studiously casual man- which he smoked, and over his cigar | 'Look at that lady! Look at the

but on Eva Rashleigh. the question. 'He's disappeared magnificent evening-dress, with nearly a mere nobody, instead of what 1 again. He is good at disappearing, every jewel she possessed glittering am—the future countess of Starboron her bare arms and on her throat ough. I wonder how long we shall the long cloak of peach satin slip from I don't mind telling you that I'm her, stretched her arms above her

'So you've got back, my dear boy?

'Yes,' he said, with a nod. 'Then you can give me some,' she doubt, the captain had gone off with said. 'I've just had a bill, and they

He took out some bank notes with which he had provided himself, and the last train; but he did not find handed them to her, and she took Rachel waiting up for him, in the them and ran them over, not grate-

> 'Is that all?' she asked. 'It won't look to his lips. pay the bill. But never mind: I'll give it to them on account; it'll keep them quiet. I've had such a good time at the theatre. It was a splendid play and such a brilliant house; but you Il be glad to know, you dear boy, that there wasn't anyone prettier

or better dressed than your little wife.' 'That's all right,' he said, returning her caress; but thinking, as he did so, of the promise he had given the bank

Rachel's extravagance was not checked by the hint he had given her; her greed for new dresses and expensive jewellery seemed insatiable. She could not see another woman in a handsome coat or cloak without desiring one like it, or one which | would eclipse it; and Sidney began almost to dread a drive or a walk with her. One day the victoria, with its high-stepping horse and its aristocratic-looking coachman and the fiendish page, were driving along the principal road, with Rachael lolling back in what she considered a ducal at-

mistress had gone to the theatre. titude and Sidney seated moodily by Sidney was almost relieved by her her side, when Rachel exclaimed,

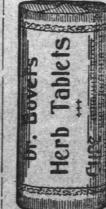
and whiskey mused-not on Rachel, men taking off their hats to her! Lucky woman! Oh, dear; I wish I Rachel came in presently in a were in her place! I might be getting rather tired of it. It's enough to make anyone sick '

She spoke with a snappishness that made her voice sound vulgar in Sidnev Bassington's ears, and, perhaps unconsciously, he drew a little away from her as he said, evasively:

'It'll all come right in time, my

'I daresay,' she retorted, 'But it's precious hard having to wait. It's a pity that old man doesn't die, so that we can come into our own. I'm getting tired of being a nobody, a Special Quotations on Demand. plain 'Mrs. Richards' Ugh! 'Mrs. Sample Cases from £10 upwards. Richards!' she repeated disgustedly. A dark red stained Sidney's face, and he put up his gloved hand to hide the sardonic smile that gave an ugly

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The fortnight ran out—and so did the money. And the bills still came pouring in.

'I shall have to go down to Starborough,' he said one morning, when a lettle came from the London agent reminding him of his undertaking to Andrews, Mrs., Gower St. pay in the amount he had over-drawn. Andrews, Mrs. James, 'And look here, Rachel, you must draw in your horns a little. We're Adey, Mrs., retd. spending ever so much too much. I Anthony, R., shall have to get a fairly large sum Abbott, Miss Lizzle, retd. from the earl, and he may cut up Brazil, Miss Susie,

Need you go to him? Can't you borrow some money? she asked. 'It s Bradbury, Mrs., only for a little while, and can't last Bainbridge, R. A. forever. I don't see what was the Brennan, Miss Mary J., use of my marrying you if I've got to stint, and go on stinting myself, per- Brennan, Miss J. haps for years.'

'That's rather a contradiction,' he said, with a sneer. 'No; I'm not such a fool as to borrow of the Jews while I can get it out of the old man. But you'll have to hold up, whether you like it or not.'

It very nearly ended in a quarrel their first open one, though they had been verging on one for some time Burke, Mrs. P. J. card past. He left her in something like hysterics, and as he travelled to Starborough he once more applauded his wisdom in stopping short of an actual marriage with Rachel, . For, fool as he was, he had a shrewd suspicion that she was a vixen.

The iourney was a long and wearisome one, and he was tired out as he walked from the station-for he had not ordered a carriage—to the castle. They had not expected him, and the dinner hour had passed, but the cook prepared a scratch meal while Sidney was dressing.

While he was eating it, Goodley came down with a message from the earl; if Mr. Sidney was not too tired, his lordship would like to see him. Sidney nodded casually, but he quailed inwardly. Had the earl heard anything about 'Rachel? His heart was in his boots as he went up the broad stairs and along the thickly Coyell, Miss S., carpeted corridor; and he knew his face was white as Goodley admitted Connolly, Miss Ethel, retd. him to the earl's room.

(To be continued.)

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