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## PURITY ECONOMY

## Happiness At Last;

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CHAPTER XV.

"I say! time—time! Dear me, how quickly it has flown! That's thanks to you, Deane." He had dropped the "Mr." already, which was really very friendly of him. "We must be going, Trevor. We dine early, you know. Oh, by the way, Deane, I wonder whether I could persuade you to waive ceremony and come and dine with us to-night? When I say 'us' I mean my sister and myself—and Trevor of course. We shall be quite en famille, you know, and I can assure you that my sister will be very pleased to see you. A friend of our dear Trevor has the surest passport—"

Trevor did not respond with a smile, but glanced at Bobby, and then suddenly made a red hand.

"Thank you," said Bobby. "I shall be very pleased."

"Now, that's very good of you," said Mr. Morgan Thorpe, gratefully. "We dine at seven-thirty. Early, isn't it? But you won't mind just once in a way, my sister—well, my sister is rather delicate, and goes to bed early. Seven-thirty. How stupid of me! I had forgotten the address."

He took a card from his case and gave it to Bobby, with a charming smile. The card bore the inscription:

"Mr. Morgan Thorpe,  
31 Cardigan Terrace, S.W."

Bobby put the card in his pocket, said he would be punctual, and the two men left the club.

When they had got outside, Trevor said, gloomily:

"Why the devil did you ask him to dinner? It wasn't necessary. I don't know much of him—an old school-fellow."

Morgan Thorpe smiled.

"My dear fellow, that's no reason why you shouldn't know more of him. I've taken a fancy to him—have indeed. Besides, he will be a pleasant addition to our petite party."

Mr. Thorpe hummed a bright little air, and Trevor muttered something under his breath. They walked to Cardigan Terrace, and Thorpe stopped outside No. 31.

"No use asking you to come in, I suppose?" he said, blandly.

Trevor looked, with a kind of savage wistfulness, up at the windows, then shook his head.

"I hate boys!" she said. "And a friend of Trevor—sulky, and sullen, and awkward as himself, I suppose?"

"On the contrary, a handsome, nicely-mannered, and, as I have said, quite charming boy."

"He will be a change, at any rate," she said. "I am getting wearied of that bear."

"Take care you do not let the bear see it!" he said, warningly. "We have not got all the bear's skin yet, my dear Laura." She smiled.

"And is this boy coming only because you have taken a fancy to him?" she asked, as she drew a thin, exquisitely thin, line under her eyes. "What—who is he?"

"Cramping for Sandhurst," he said. She smiled contemptuously.

"I know the kind. An allowance of a hundred a year, and promised his dear good mother down at the parsonage that he wouldn't play. Oh, I know!"

"I don't know what his allowance may be," he said. "But I fancy he will be worth a little attention, my dear Laura." He took up a newspaper which lay—with a fan and a lady's silver cigarette-case—on the couch. "See here!" He read aloud:

"The Great Electric Storage Co. Ltd.  
Capital, £100,000.  
Directors:  
Lord Borrowmore, Impecunary Castle, Theodores Merston, Esq., The First, Leafmore.  
Peter Deane, Esq., Woodbine, Leafmore."

"See? A son of the man who is in the swim with Theodore Merston ought to be worth a little attention. You are looking sweet to-night, my dear Laura. What are you going to wear? That soft yellow dress with the—er—low neck? Right! He's a nice boy. A nice, frank boy. The sort of boy to fall in love with."

He pointed to the glass, in which the fascinating face was reflected, and with a soft laugh, left the room.

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### CHAPTER XVI.

Bobby dressed himself with more than his usual care that evening, spoiled half a dozen ties before he could get one to set to his satisfaction, and brushed his short but wavy hair until it shone like raw silk. It was his first invitation to dinner since he had been in London, and he was quite in a small state of excitement about it.

Punctually at seven-thirty he presented himself at 31 Cardigan Terrace, and was shown by the French maid into a small drawing-room. It was the usual London drawing-room: there were a good many colors in it, and it looked rather gay to Bobby after the rather shabby one at home; but the cretonne was rather dirty, and there was an odor of scented cigarettes which rather surprised him.

The door opened and Mr. Morgan Thorpe entered. He looked very handsome in evening-dress, and he welcomed Bobby most cordially.

"Delighted to see you, my dear Deane," he said, with his winning smile. "Trevor is not here yet; my sister will be down presently. Did I tell you that she is a widow? Poor girl! she lost her husband soon after her marriage. It was not altogether a happy union; but I must not bore you with our family history; suffice it, that Time has healed her wound and restored something of her old happiness. I think you will like her, my dear Deane. She is a dear girl—for she is only a girl still—and a great comfort and joy to my life."

At this moment the door opened and the great comfort and joy of Mr. Morgan Thorpe's life entered. She certainly did look only a girl and Bobby was startled not only by her youth but by her beauty. There was something about her which literally took the boy's breath away.

At that moment her face wore a pensive expression, the dark eyes were soft and sad, and the red lips half apart. The beautiful dress of yellow accentuated the clear whiteness of her skin and the black hair and brows. She held a black fan in one hand and a bunch of white flowers in the other. Altogether she was a vision of grace and loveliness calculated to move a more experienced man than Bobby to wonder and admiration.

"This is our friend Mr. Deane," said Morgan Thorpe. "My sister, Mrs. Dalton, Deane."

She laid down her fan and gave her small hand to Bobby, with a smile which showed her white even teeth to perfection, and said she was glad to see him. Commonplace words enough, but they sounded wonderful to Bobby, for the gods, when they are in a good humor, are wont to be lavish of their gifts, and they had bestowed upon this woman not only grace of form and a beautiful face, but a soft and musical voice which she could play on as a skilled musician plays upon his favorite instrument.

"You find our menage very small, I have no doubt, my dear Deane," said Morgan Thorpe. "We have taken this house furnished; and though it is not all that we could desire, it is large enough for two, and my sister and I possess contented minds; though I must confess we do find the house rather small after our palazzo in Florence. It was lent to us by our dear friend the prince."

He did not say which prince; but Bobby was duly impressed.

"Ours has been rather a wandering life," continued Mr. Morgan Thorpe. "and though we have many friends abroad we have very few in London."

"Mr. Deane will be a host in himself, I am sure," said Laura, very sweetly and with a slight foreign accent, which made her voice seem still more charming to Bobby, who blushed with pleasure.

Then Trevor came in. He did not look very much better-tempered than when Bobby had parted from him. He gave the two men a nod and a scowl, and going straight up to Laura, handed her a bouquet.

"Get them coming along," he said; "thought you'd like to have them."

(To be continued.)

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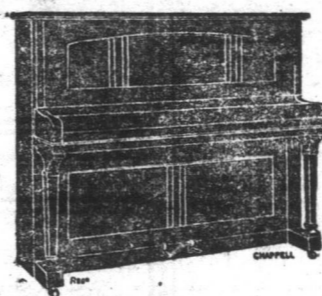
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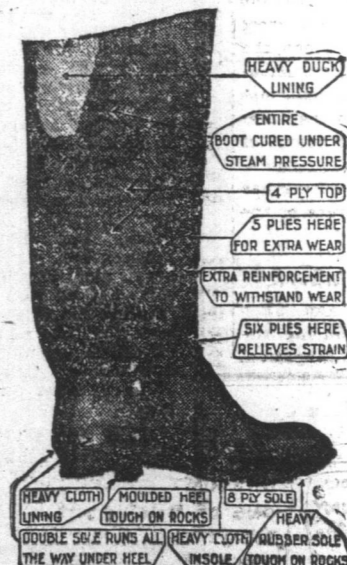
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