

THE HEIR OF Lancewood

CHAPTER III.

Gerald Dorman never forgot the day of the baronet's return. It was intensely warm and bright—one of those days in June when the blue sky has no cloud, when no summer wind stirs the trees, even the birds seemed to find it too hot for singing, and had retired into the shadiest depths of the trees. The warm air was full of sweet odors, the rippling of the fountains made pleasant music—it was a day when nature seems awaiting some unwonted event, and the world seems to stand still in its golden haze.

The day had arrived, the travellers were to be at the Abbey about seven. Still Vivien had spoken no word.

Gerald went to her when the morning was over; he looked at the proud face—it was unnaturally calm and still.

"I am half frightened, Miss Neslie," he said, "to ask you what carriage should be sent to the station."

"Any you please," she replied, shortly. "I have no suggestion to make on the subject, and decline to discuss it."

With that answer he was compelled to be content, but it was to save her that he studied so hard to make all things pleasant and to carry out Sir Arthur's wishes—it was to save her that he went so carefully and anxiously through the house, trying to find out if everything was as its master would like it.

It was six o'clock before Gerald Dorman presented himself in the character of an invited guest in the drawing-room. He looked with some curiosity for Miss Neslie's entrance. How would she receive the coming interloper, the young wife who was in great measure to wrest her kingdom from her?

She came in soon afterward; and though he had seen her often in the brilliancy of evening toilet, he was startled. She looked older, more dignified, more stately; she looked far more like the wife of the master of the house than his daughter. It was such a strange toilet, too—all black, with gleaming diamonds throwing out the loveliest of lights—a dress of rich black lace; the perfect curves of her shoulders and arms were shown to perfection, the white neck looked the fairer for the contrast. A diamond star shone in the coils of silken hair; a diamond cross glittered on the white breast. She had evidently chosen a toilet that would add to her age and dignity; she had tried to look older instead of younger, and she had succeeded. The lovely Southern face had lost none of its color;



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the dainty rose-leaf flush was on her cheeks, the rich crimson on her lips. He had looked on many fair women, but none so fair as this daughter of the Neslies.

She did not speak when she entered the room; she looked at him with calm, graceful indifference—it was not often that she seemed to take any special interest in the young secretary. He rose with a grave, ceremonious bow; she took up a book and sat down by the open window.

"How proud she is!" he thought. "I am less to her than the ground beneath her feet, than the leaves on the trees—less than the faded flowers she throws away—yet I—Dear Heaven, I dare not think how I love her—I fare scarcely say it even to myself!" He watched her as she sat there; the white jewelled hands that turned the pages of her book so listlessly never trembled, the color never varied on her face, even when the sound of the carriage wheels was heard, and Gerald Dorman rose with an agitated face, saying—

"They are here, Miss Neslie."

"They are earlier than I expected," was the calm reply.

She did not lay her book down or make any sign of disturbing herself. Gerald trembled with excitement and agitation.

"Miss Neslie, are you going down in the hall? Sir Arthur will expect it, I—"

"Pray do not trouble yourself, Mr. Dorman; I am not going down into the hall. You can, of course, please yourself."

He went—more to save her than gratify himself—and he owned that it was a sight well worth seeing—the grand entrance hall, with its mosaic pavement, its great stands of flowers and orange-trees, the wealth of antiquities that decorated the walls, the long line of domestics, all standing to welcome the bride. He saw Sir Arthur, tall and stately, with a pleased, bright expression on his face, leading by the hand a lady whose features he could not see, for she wore a veil; but her figure was the very perfection of grace. Sir Arthur held her hand in his, and in a few well-chosen words introduced her to his dependents as their future Lady Neslie. Then, seeing Gerald, he held out his hand, with a frank, kindly smile.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Dorman. We have had quite a royal reception, such a welcome home as we shall never forget. I have been quite touched by it. Where is Miss Neslie?"

There was a moment of blank silence—of silence inexpressibly painful—and every one felt it to be so. Where was she who had always hurried to meet him, who had been wont to fling her arms round his neck, regardless of who was present, and give him such a rapturous welcome home? Sir Arthur looked around, but the fair face of his daughter was not there. Gerald hastened to reply:

"Miss Neslie is in the drawing-room, Sir Arthur; she awaits you there."

He saw a sudden darkening of the baronet's face; but just then a sweet, lingering voice said:

"How charming, Arthur! Are all English mansions like this?"

The voice was sweet and clear, the accent pretty and piquant, after the fashion of French ladies who speak English well. It seemed to have a magical charm for Sir Arthur; his face cleared and his eyes brightened. "No, Valerie," he replied; "there are few houses, even in England, like this."

Then Lady Neslie spoke to Mrs. Spenser, the butler, and one or two of the servants. Sir Arthur turning to her, said:

"We will go to the drawing-room, Valerie—Miss Neslie is there. Come with us, Mr. Dorman."

It seemed to Gerald that the master of the Abbey was, after all, in no hurry to meet his child. He seemed to linger by the way, pointing out a rare picture or statue to his wife. Gerald began to suspect that the proud baronet felt some little trepidation at the thought of meeting his still prouder daughter. They passed through the magnificent suite of rooms, the stranger's sweet voice sounding like the cooling of a dove; yet, sweet as it was, Gerald feared that there was something insincere in the ring of it.

When they reached the drawing-room, Vivien was still sitting where he had left her; but when they entered she rose with a stately grace all her own. Sir Arthur released his wife's hand and went up to his daughter. She stood before him, tall, dark, dignified, with all the pride of her race flashing in her dark eyes.

"My dear Vivien," said Sir Arthur, "how well you are looking! Have you no word for me?"

She did not clasp her arms round his neck, after the old impulsive fashion, nor did she raise her beautiful face to kiss him; and Sir Arthur felt that it was the beginning of hostilities. She held out her hand to him.

"Welcome home, papa," she said, briefly.

"Thank you, Vivien. And now, my darling, I want you to welcome some one else—I want you to welcome my beloved wife."

If it had been to save her life, Vivien could not have smiled, could not have uttered a kindly word. She made a stiff, formal courtesy, and there was a moment of painful silence. Again Gerald saw the baronet's face darkening—again the soft, cooling voice seemed to break the spell. Sir Arthur's wife held out her hand to Sir Arthur's daughter.

"The greatest pleasure I had in coming to Lancewood was the hope that you would love me."

"You are very good," said Vivien, coldly.

"Good—nay," opposed the sweet voice, "I do not know that I am good. Ah, that is an English idiom! They are hard to understand. If wishing for love makes one good, then am I good."

A smile, almost of contempt, curled Vivien's lips as she saw her father looking with rapt devotion at his new wife.

"As though words meant anything!" thought Miss Neslie. "Here are sweet enough, but the very sound of her voice is false."

Sir Arthur turned to his daughter. "I venture to promise for you, Vivien, that you will soon love Lady Neslie—no one can help it. Valerie, you will like to go to your apartments. Perhaps, Vivien, you—"

"Has Lady Neslie a maid?" she asked, quickly.

"Yes," replied Sir Arthur.

"Then she had better go with her. I will speak to you, papa."

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CHAPTER IV.

Lady Neslie left the drawing-room, and, with her maid and the house-keeper, soon found herself in the magnificent rooms appointed for her. She listened to Mrs. Spenser's explanations, and then courteously dismissed her.

"This is very good, Marie," she said to her maid, when they were alone. "I never thought to find Lancewood so grand. It is a palace; I have seen nothing like it."

"It is none too good for miladi," observed the girl; "and I wish you, miladi, years of happiness in it."

"I shall be happy enough," said the bride; "plenty of money always make one happy. Marie, find me the prettiest dress I have. This young lady, Sir Arthur's daughter, is stately and beautiful as a princess; I feel quite plain and insignificant by her side. Find me something very nice, that I may surpass her."

"She cannot be more beautiful than miladi," declared the girl, flatteringly.

"Yes, she is. You do not understand. She has the face of a princess; she has the manner of a princess; she speaks like one. Find me my prettiest dress and my rarest jewels. She shall not surpass me."

"But, miladi, is it good taste—jewels and a costly dress for this dinner en famille? I think not. My late mistress, the Duchess of Fitzburgh, never made a very elaborate toilet for dinner with her own family."

"Of course you know best," said Lady Neslie, impatiently. "I wish there had never been a Duchess of Fitzburgh; she is always being quoted against me. Have your own way, Marie."

"No, miladi—your way, not mine. If your ladyship will trust to me, your toilet shall be such as Sir Arthur's daughter cannot help admiring."

There was a strange familiarity between "miladi" and her maid when they were together alone. When Lady Neslie was impatient, Marie gave her plenty of sound advice, always quoting, as a last resource, the Duchess of Fitzburgh. "Left to herself, Lady Neslie would have chosen some elaborate costume; she would have decked herself with costly jewels. Marie's good taste prevailed. The young wife wore a dress of plain white silk, trimmed with silver net, a few beautiful pearls round her throat. It was pretty and bride-like. Lady Neslie owned that nothing could be better."

"I shall have to dress well and use all my powers of pleasing," she said to herself; "for Miss Neslie does not like me, I am sure. I have won Sir Arthur—now I must try to win her."

If she had seen Vivien just then, she would have despaired of ever winning her. Mr. Dorman had, much to the baronet's discomfort, quitted the room. He had hoped to avoid all private conversation with his daughter, but her strong will prevailed—they were left alone. Then Vivien went up to him and clasped her arms round his neck.

"Welcome home, papa! I could not kiss you before, with that stranger here. Oh, papa, why have you brought her? Why have you married her? Was not I enough for you? Why did you bring her here—a girl—only a girl? Why did you marry her?"

Sir Arthur looked very uncomfortable. It was not the pleasant position in the world. He tried to make the best of it. He threw his arm round her and drew her nearer to him.

(To be Continued.)

The Sergeant's Mess.

"Do you mean that you want me to press your trousers?" she demanded, with all the sternness she could muster.

"Why, certainly, my dear," replied Sergeant Euchre, affably. "Am I asking too much?"

"Well, I should just about think so, Charles William. I'd have you to know that when you married me you didn't marry a flat-iron."

Charles William thought a lot. That same evening Mrs. Euchre chipped in with, "Oh, Charles, you might just button my dress up the back before you go out."

But Sergeant Euchre merely filled his pipe as he chuckled softly. "Not much, popsy-wopsy. You must remember that when you accepted me you did not marry a buttonhook."

And setting his cap at a rakish angle, he made for the sergeant's mess.

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BONAR RESUMES HIS DUTIES LONDON, Ju Sir Edward Grey, whose night of an American who, rested, has resumed his d Secretary of State for Fore fairs.

AMERICAN SPY ARREST LONDON, Ju The British police at Gravesd night of an American who, rested, was wearing the unif Princess Patricia's Canadian ment. When arraigned in coe prisoner, whose name has no made public, said that he bou uniform in Plymouth a fortin from a soldier for 50 cents. r remained for further invest

BRITISH ASSIST SER LIVERPOOL, Ju That British troops are S Serbia fighting with the S against the Austro-Hungarian given official confirmation to Crawford Price, British eye with the Serbian forces. He British army authorities ha

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