



For Her Sake;
—OR—
The Murder in Furness Wood.

CHAPTER VIII.

"But Lady Scarsdale is clever enough to make him think that it is for Diana's good," sighed Lady Colwyn.

And Sir Royal stood aghast at the thought of so undesirable an event.

"It must be fancy, Lady Colwyn," "If Mr. Cameron had cared about marrying again, he would have done so long ago, after a few minutes' silence, so before now."

"He has not met a Lady Scarsdale until now," responded Lady Colwyn, in desponding tones.

If the matter had not been so serious, Sir Royal would have smiled at the wistful face of the speaker; but he was thinking of Diana.

"I cannot believe," he said, suddenly, "that Mr. Cameron will ever take such a step. It would be cruel to Diana. She has been mistress of the house for so long that it would be painful to ask her to make room for another."

"Cruel or not, Sir Royal, you will see that he will do it," declared Lady Colwyn, confidently. "I am grieved for Diana. Grieved for that tall, splendid young beauty who had quenched it so royally over them all! The world seemed out of place. 'I have always thought,' said Lady Colwyn, 'that a very large fortune is a great mistake. Peter Cameron has three millions of money, and his immense fortune has fired his ambition. He would have been happier and wiser had he had less.'"

But that part of the question did not interest Sir Royal. His thoughts were concentrated on Diana, for he knew how terrible such an event as her father's marrying again would be to her.

"I shall hope against hope," he said. "Mr. Cameron has always seemed to me a very kind and sensible man."

"No man is sensible who is bitten with the pride of life," affirmed Lady Colwyn; "and that is what has happened to him."

Sir Royal was miserable for days after that conversation. He could not endure the thought that a cloud should darken the sunshine of Diana's life.

CHAPTER IX.

Lady Scarsdale had decided. She was quite tired of the struggle with splendid poverty, quite tired of keep-

ing up appearances, and of straining every nerve to make both ends meet. She was tired of the ceaseless economy, the great self-restraint that the absence of wealth imposed upon her. It was seldom that she could indulge any whim, any wish of her own; and she knew that no life was more hollow than hers. It had happened to her more than once that, on leaving grand country house where she had been the most brilliant and popular guest, she had great difficulty in finding money sufficient to fee the servants and to pay the railway fare. She was tired of the struggle, and longed with all her heart for wealth and its concomitant advantages. She longed for the encourage that had once been hers—and surely here was her chance! She had often thought that she would marry again; but, though she was admired and generally popular, no one with rank and money had up to this time offered her marriage—men looked askance at the two daughters. Now, however, it seemed as though there were a turn of the tide.

"Three millions of money! I could be the reigning queen of London society if I had the command of that," she mused; and she decided that she would have the command of it by marrying Peter Cameron.

He was by no means a vulgar parvenu. There was nothing perhaps in his appearance to be proud of, but there was nothing of which she need be ashamed, and to be mistress of that magnificent house one could tolerate a few drawbacks. She did not devote much time to thinking of the young heiress Diana; she thought principally of herself and her daughters.

Something that she said at parting induced Mr. Cameron to visit her the next day. There was never a greater triumph of art and diplomacy, of tact and of cunning, than that wooing of Lady Scarsdale. It was her wooing of all intents and purposes. On some pretext or other she saw Mr. Cameron daily, and she kept faithfully to the line that she had laid down for herself. She always talked about his daughter, and of the great advantage it would be if he married some one who could introduce her into the most exclusive society, adding that an excellent thing it would be for Diana if she had some one to take the responsibility of that great household from her. He listened until he believed. He did not know himself how far he was in love with the handsome, gracious woman; but he assured himself that his interest in her sprang solely from a desire to benefit his daughter, that the acquaintance would be a great advantage to Diana. "It would be a capital thing for Diana," he often said to himself. If he had examined his own heart more closely, he would have found that he had fallen in love with this charming but scheming woman.

The climax was reached one morning when he rode over to Tresham to invite the whole party to a picnic. Lady Tresham was engaged, and Lady Scarsdale received her visitor. She led him on as usual, to talk about Diana; and Peter Cameron's infatuation for the lady who took such an interest in his darling daughter visibly increased.

"You must let Miss Cameron stay with us next season," she said. "We have not been to town this year."

"What is the remedy?" asked Peter Cameron, at last.

"A very safe and pleasant one," said Lady Scarsdale, smiling. "You should find a wife who would accomplish such things for you—one accustomed to the ways of the fashionable world."

"But where could I find such a wife?" asked Peter Cameron with strange hesitation.

She looked at him with a smile that dazzled him.

"That is a question I cannot answer," she said; "but I do not think you would have much difficulty."

Another pause, one more embarrassing than the last, and then Peter Cameron, in hesitating tones, said:

"Lady Scarsdale, would you condescend to be my wife?"

He did not notice the swift paling of his companion's proud face or the sudden quiver of her lips. Had she gained three millions of money, after all? She hardly thought of the man himself in her suppressed joy at the prospect before her.

"I know," he continued, half proudly, half humbly, "both my advantages and disadvantages. I say nothing of

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Evadne did not seem well, and I was not equal to it." In reality Lady Scarsdale had not been able to find the necessary funds; the bijou house, the stalwart footman, the hired brougham, were this year beyond her reach. "Let her spend next summer with us," she paused suddenly, and added, "I have often thought of asking you, has Miss Cameron been presented?"

"No," he replied, "she has not."

"How is that?"—and Lady Scarsdale seemed much surprised. "Not presented!" she said. "That is greatly to be regretted."

"To tell you the truth, Lady Scarsdale," he answered, "his honest face flushing as he spoke, "I had a great desire that she should be presented by the Duchess of Stone. When I first came to the country, between two and three years ago, every one told me that would be the proper course to pursue. I would have taken a house in town for the season, and indeed I would have spared no expense, if the Duchess had not avoided us. When Diana makes her debut in society, I wish her to do so under proper auspices."

"You are right," said Lady Scarsdale; "but you have placed your daughter in a very strange position. Here you have a girl mistress of a magnificent establishment, giving balls and entertainments, going to others, acting indeed with the freedom and liberty generally accorded only to married women, and yet she has never been presented at Court! You have been ill advised, Mr. Cameron. You have made a great mistake."

"I know nothing of the laws of etiquette of the upper classes," rejoined honest Peter Cameron. "I was anxious to do everything for the best for my daughter, and now it seems I have done wrong."

"It is not too late to remedy the mistake," she said; and then there was a pause.

Her heart beat faster, and her handsome face paled slightly. The thought of three millions of money, however, sustained her. After all, she was only doing what hundreds of other women would have done if they had had the chance—trying to secure a good husband for herself.

"If he does not speak now he never will," was Lady Scarsdale's mental comment.

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love—you would hardly believe in that; but this I say, that I admire and esteem you more than any other woman living, and I would do all in my power to make you happy. Yet I hardly dare hope or expect that you will consent."

"It would be what the world calls a sensible marriage," she said, thoughtfully. "You have money—I confess frankly that I have very little—and I have rank. You could give your daughter a large fortune; I could procure her admittance into the most exclusive circles in London. You must not be shocked if I say candidly that a marriage between us would be the very best thing that could happen for Miss Cameron."

"Then will you accept my proposal?" asked Mr. Cameron, somewhat anxiously.

"I cannot just at once. Of course it is a great surprise to me."

He believed her, and for a moment was lost in admiration of her disinterested conduct and advice.

"I must have time to think it over, and so must you," added her ladyship.

"I am afraid if you take much time to consider it, I shall lose my cause," he said, with a sigh. "I would try to make you very happy, Lady Scarsdale; and in ministering to your every desire I should reap unbounded happiness."

"Do you remember that I have two daughters?" she asked. "They would be excellent companions for Diana, if it is true."

"It would be the best thing in the world for her," said the captivated millionaire. "You must not keep me long in suspense, Lady Scarsdale."

"Three millions of money!" she repeated to herself again and again; still she showed no signs of elation.

"I must have time," she urged. "It is a matter that will require much thought. I need hardly say that I should have to make some sacrifices."

"Three millions of money!" seemed to ring through her brain.

Peter Cameron told himself, first, how much he admired her, then what an advantage the union would be to Diana, and, lastly, how pleasant it would be to hear "Mr. and Lady Cameron announced! Of course, as she was an earl's daughter, she would keep her title, and the Duchess of Stone would no longer "draw the line" at him then.

"I will take a few days to consider it, Mr. Cameron," said her ladyship, with mild dignity. "I could not make so great a change in my life without due consideration—you understand that?"

"Yes, I understand perfectly," he replied.

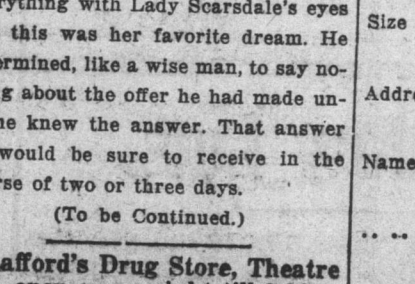
She held out her hand to him with a queenly gesture.

"You will forgive me if I say goodbye, Mr. Cameron. I am a little agitated. Do not call again just yet; give me time."

Peter Cameron took the jeweled white hand held out to him and kissed it; and as he rode home the sky and the earth seemed to whirl round him. The making of his vast fortune had been a source of wonder to him; that he should marry an earl's daughter was a still greater matter for wonder. He was too completely lost in contemplating his future prospects even to remember the dear dead wife, Diana's mother. Musing to himself, he felt that this was the best social step he had ever taken. "Mr. and Lady Cameron!" He was delighted with the sound of the words. And what a good thing the alliance would be for Diana! He saw everything with Lady Scarsdale's eyes and this was her favorite dream. He determined, like a wise man, to say nothing about the offer he had made until he knew the answer. That answer he would be sure to receive in the course of two or three days.

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