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REFUSE SUBSTITUTES.

'Margaret,' The GIRL ARTIST, OR, The Countess of Ferrers Court.

CHAPTER XXI.

Presently she saw the prince approaching, with an old gentleman at his side, an old man with long silvery hair and pale face, from which the dark eyes shone with a strange brilliance that was yet soft and dreamy. "Miss Leslie," said the prince, "let me introduce Signor Alfaro to you."

It was the great artist whose works Margaret had stood before with admiration and awe.

She inclined her head without a word. The great artist's eyes rested on her keenly for a moment, then he said:

"To have seen your picture, Miss Leslie, is to desire a knowledge of you. You are very young!"

It was a strange speech, and it brought the color to Margaret's face.

"I had expected to see an older person—one whose experience would account for her success; but it is always so, it is to youth all things are possible. My dear, you have painted a wonderful picture! It is a work of genius. I cannot tell you how it has moved me. How came you to paint it?"

Margaret looked up questioningly and fearfully.

"I mean," said the great man, with a kindly smile, "where did you get your subject? Waves and rocks are old as the hills, but your waves and rocks are new because they are so terribly real. And the figure, too! Why, yes—it is your own! Miss Leslie, your picture is a great one. I tell you this without flattery, and as one of your trade. It is great, and it will bring you fame."

Fame! Alas, it might bring her fame, but of what value would fame be to her now?

Perhaps the absence of all joy in her face as she received the tidings, touched the great man, for he said:

"But we do not care for that, do we? Not so greatly, that is. It is the satisfaction in our work, is it not? Will you come with me and let me ask you a few questions about one or two things in your picture?"

He held out his arm, and Margaret, still speechless, let him lead her to the easel upon which the picture stood.

The group, clustering round it, made way for the pair, looking at Margaret, and whispering together in the well-bred way which conceals the act.

The great artist asked his questions—they related to various lights and shades, and wave formations—and Margaret answered modestly, in her low, sweet voice; then the prince, who stood on the other side of her, found

himself besieged by applications for introductions, and quietly he brought one after another of the group to Margaret, and made them known to her.

It was evident that she was the celebrity of the evening. The fame which the great artist had prophesied had come already, for there was not one there who was not willing to blow a blast upon the trumpet which announces the appearance of a great one to the waiting and welcoming world.

It was not only the fact that she had painted a picture which Alfaro had pronounced "great," but her beauty, with its touching air of subdued sadness, took possession of them.

They gathered around her, these noblemen and famous ladies, and made much of her, until the prince, fearing that she would be tired and overdone, offered her his arm, and led her, on the excuse of showing her the flowers, toward the conservatory.

Margaret was tired and excited, though there was no trace of it in the sweet, pale face, and she was glad of a few minutes' rest.

The prince led her to a seat placed amidst a cluster of ferns and exotics, and, taking up a fan, gently fanned her.

"I spoke truly, you see, Miss Leslie," he said. "I cannot tell you with what joy and pride—yes, pride!—Signor Alfaro's words filled me. But we will not speak of them again to-night; though I trust they have made you as happy as they have made me."

There was something in his voice which half frightened Margaret, and, as she looked up to reply, she found his eyes fixed upon her with a light in them which caused hers to droop, though why she knew not.

"The signor—every one—has been good to me," she said.

"No," he said, with a suppressed earnestness. "That no one who knows you could be."

He was silent a moment, then he looked round.

"Ah, how glad I am to be at home!" he said, as he spoke his eyes returned to her face.

"And they are all glad to have you, prince," said Margaret.

"All?" he said. "May I include you, Miss Leslie?"

A faint flush rose to Margaret's face, then it grew pale again.

"I?" she said. "Oh, yes, I am glad!"

"You make me very glad to hear you say that," he said in a low voice, bending down so that he almost whispered the words in her ears. "I have thought of you very often while I have been away, Miss Leslie, wondering, and hoping that you might be happy here at the villa, and longing to get back that I might see you again."

Margaret's heart beat fast. She told herself that it was only the language of courtly kindness; warmer than an Englishman would use, but meaning no more than usual.

"What beautiful flowers!" she said, looking at a bunch of camillas before her.

He glanced at her dress, unadorned by a single article of jewelry, then crossing the conservatory, picked a snow-white blossom and brought it to her.

"Will you accept this?" he said.

"Oh, thank you," said Margaret. "How lovely it is," and she held it in her hand.

"Will you wear it?" he asked, and his voice grew low and almost tremulous.

Margaret started and her face went white.

They were almost the very words Blair had spoken in the little garden at Leyton Court that never-to-be-forgotten night, and they brought back the past and her own position with a lurid distinctness.

"No, no!" she breathed, scarcely

knowing what she said, and she let the flower drop into her lap.

The prince's face grew grave and pained.

"Have—have I offended you?"—have I been too presumptuous?" he asked humbly.

"No, no!" she said, again. "Fret she looked up. "Presumptuous, your highness? You! to me! The presumption would be mine if I—if I were to accept—" she paused.

"Do I understand you?" he said, drawing nearer, his handsome, patrician face flushing, his eyes seeking hers with an eager intentness. "Miss Leslie, my poor flower would be honored by the touch of your hand; will you honor me also by wearing it? Miss Leslie—" he paused a moment, then went on—"I do not think you understand. Shall I tell you now, or are you too tired and wearied? I think you must know what I would say. Such love as mine will break through all guards, try as we will to hide it, and proclaim itself to the beloved one—"

Margaret started to her feet with a wild horror in her eyes.

"Do not—speak another word!" she breathed. "I—I cannot listen! I—I take me back, please, your highness!"

The prince's face paled, and his lips shut tightly; but with the courtly grace which could not forsake him, even at such a moment, he took her hand and drew it through his arm.

"Your lightest word is law to me," he murmured. "I will say no more to-night! Not one word, be assured of that. You may trust me, if you will not do more!"

Margaret was speechless, her heart throbbing with a dreadful amazement and horror. That he—the great prince—should have spoken to her—to her upon whose life rested so dark a shame, almost maddened her.

In silence he led her into the salon.

As he did so, a certain noble lady, an old schoolfellow of his mother, who was sitting beside her, looked up at them, then turned to the signora.

"This is a very beautiful girl, signora!"

"The old lady glanced at Margaret and smiled placidly.

"Miss Leslie?"—yes.

"Very," said the countess. "There is something sad and spirittuelle about her which renders her loveliness something higher than the ordinary beauty of which one sees so much nowadays."

"Yes," said the signora. "I fear she has passed through some great sorrow. There is a look in her eyes when she is silent and thinking, which makes one tempted to get up and kiss her."

"A dangerous charm, that," remarked the countess dryly.

"A charm; yes, that is the word," assented the signora, smiling. "She has charmed the heart of Florence, and has crept into mine, poor girl."

"Poor girl!" echoed the countess, dryly; then, as it seemed abruptly and inconsequently, she said, "How handsome Ferdinand has grown!"

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The signora let her eyes linger upon him with all a mother's pride and tenderness.

"Yes; has he not? He is like his father."

"And his mother," said the countess. "He is a great favorite at court, my dear. There is a career before him if there should happen to be a war, as I suppose there will be."

"I could do without a career for him if the price is to be a war," said the signora, sighing.

"He seems very attentive to Miss Leslie," remarked the countess, looking at the two young people as they crossed the room.

The prince had found a seat for Margaret, but still remained by her side, bending over her with that rapt attention which distinguished him.

"Oh, yes," assented the signora, placidly. "He thinks a great deal of her. I imagine that he is very pleased at the success of her picture. Ferdinand is devoted to art; and says that the villa is renowned as the birth-place of so great a picture as Miss Leslie's has painted."

"Hem!" said the countess; then, with a frown, she said, "Don't you think that the charm you speak of may exert itself over Ferdinand?"

"Over Ferdinand?" the signora glanced across at them with a serene smile.

"Yes, over Ferdinand," repeated the old countess, almost impatiently, "or do you think that the male heart is less susceptible than the female. Do you suppose that Ferdinand is blind to Miss Leslie's loveliness, and that it is only revealed to you and Florence?"

"What do you mean?" asked the signora.

"What do I mean? Why, my dear Lucille, aren't you afraid that, to speak plainly, Ferdinand may—fall in love with Miss Leslie?"

The old princess looked at her for a moment with a mild surprise, then she drew her slight figure up to its full height and smiled with placid haughtiness.

"Ferdinand will not fall in love with Miss Leslie," she said, with an air of calm conviction.

"Oh," said the countess, dryly.

"Does he wear an amulet warranted to protect him from such eyes as hers, such beauty as hers?"

"Yes," said the mother. "Ferdinand wears such an amulet. It is the consciousness of his rank and all its duties and responsibilities. Miss Leslie is a most charming girl, and Florence and I are attached to her; but Ferdinand—" she paused and smiled.

"I know Ferdinand very well. I think, my dear, so well, that if you were to hint that he was likely to fall in love with one of the maid-servants I should be as little alarmed."

The countess looked at her with a strange smile, then glanced at the prince and Margaret.

"My dear Lucille," she said, "I beg your pardon. Of course, you are quite right, and there is no danger. There has never been an instance of one of our rank marrying beneath him, has there?" and she laughed ironically.

The signora smiled and shook her head.

"My dear," she said, "there isn't a prouder man in Italy than Ferdinand. I am not at all uneasy."

(To be Continued.)

"Should I wait until everyone is served before I begin teazing, or should I begin as soon as I am served?" asked Winnie.

"It is not always necessary to wait until every guest is served, but you should always wait until your hostess has begun her meal before you begin yours," replied her mother.

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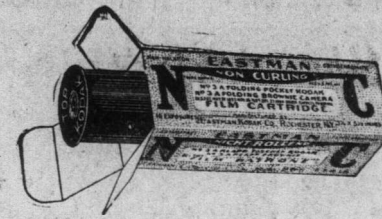
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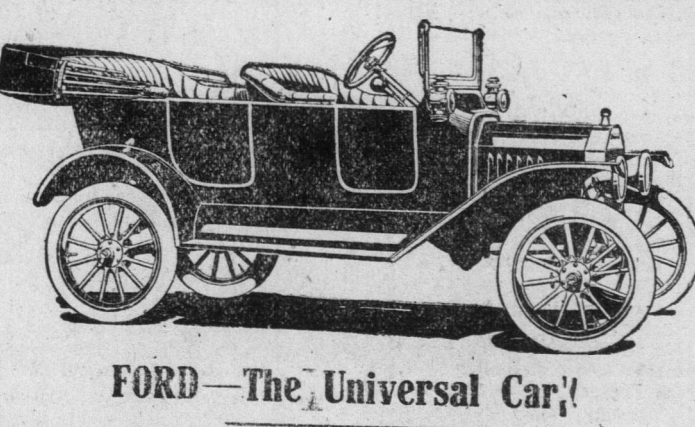
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War News.

Messages Received Previous to 9 A.M.

OFFICIAL.

LONDON, April 24.

The Governor, Newfoundland:

No important changes on the British and French front.

The Russians have gained a great success in the capture of Trebnoye by the combined efforts of the fleet and army.

Attempts to relieve Kut are seriously hampered by bad weather.

Operations in East Africa are proceeding favourably.

BONAR LAW.

GREETINGS FROM KING GEORGE.

LONDON, April 24.

King George sent the following telegram on Easter Day to Emperor Nicholas: "To-day, when by happy coincidence our two nations are celebrating Easter, we are commemorating St. George. I cannot refrain from sending you congratulations and renewed confidence in the victory of the Allied armies. I followed with delight the recent victories achieved by your gallant army." Emperor Nicholas replied thus: "Warmest thanks for your Easter greetings and good wishes. I entirely share your confidence in the ultimate success of our combined efforts."

WILL NOT ASSIST GENERAL CONSCRIPTION.

NEW YORK, April 24.

A News Agency despatch from Newcastle, England, today says: "The radical wing of the Labor Party under no circumstances will assist a government policy of general conscription. President Jowett declared at the annual conference of the Independent Labor Party, held to-day. Such an adventure was bound to be disastrous to the country, regardless of the military outcome. Said Jowett if we find at the end of the war that the military is responsible for a situation where skilled workers are brought down to the level of unskilled; where women labor is cheaper than men's; where a capitalist war and profiteering has enriched the employing classes, and consolidated their power, then the war will be followed by industrial strife and more privations."

SIR ROGER CASEMENT CAPTURED.

LONDON, April 24.

Sir Roger Casement has been captured from a German ship which attempted to land arms in Ireland, and

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