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The Heir of Rosedene

OR, The Game-Keeper's Hut

CHAPTER XXXIX. IN THE GAMEKEEPER'S HUT.

"Ah, yes, that horrible, horrible money!" murmured Edna, drooping on his loved bosom. "It was you who sat in the room below us at Mr. Burton's—you were Sir Cyril More, my husband! And you have been in poverty and danger all this time, when you were really rich, when you might have had it all! Oh, Cyril, I don't deserve to have you back—no, I do not deserve this happiness!" Cyril looked at her with a half-smiled smile.

"Happiness!—Edna, I can't believe it seems so strange that you should care for such a worthless, useless creature!"

"Isn't it strange!" she smiled, putting her white hands upon his great shoulders, and holding him back while she looked at him, with a quaint, budding affectation of disparagement. "Such a great, awkward, clumsy monster, in an old shooting jacket, and great, heavy boots—for all the world like a gamekeeper! No, on second thought, I don't think I can bring myself to endure you!"

"Oh, oh!" he cried, with a great mad laugh, as he caught her to him. "Who was it that wanted to share the gamekeeper's hut, and make his tea, let me fill his pipe? Here, Aunt Martha!" he called, over his shoulders, to a movement of Edna's told him that the old lady had re-entered, "the angler keeper doesn't give satisfaction! I shall get the sack next, I expect!"

"You'd better have something to eat; I've had supper put on in the breakfast room."

"Supper!—the very thing! I'm as hungry as a hunter! Come along!" and much to the delight of the stately butler, who tripped about one vast smile, and who, being under the impression that Sir Cyril must have been half starved, longed for the moment when he should get him in a chair and stuff him with rich meals

and rare wine. Cyril—the boyish, and light-hearted Cyril of old—put one arm round each of the ladies, and cried, laughingly:

"Come along! I'll show you how a keeper can eat!"

CHAPTER XXXI. HER GRACE'S VERDICT.

NEXT morning, while the Rosedene breakfast was still on the table, there was a little bustle in the hall, and a lady's maid inquiring with some excitement for "Miss Weston."

"Miss Weston," if there was such a person, was at that moment sitting on the arm of a great easy-chair, holding a cup of coffee for handsome, indolent, "wicked" Sir Cyril, who, buried in the deep recesses of the chair, was prolonging the meal for the mere wanton pleasure of adoring his beautiful and adored slave—willing slave—near him; and before either the lord and master or the slave could change their positions, the door opened, and the duchess was announced.

Edna sprang to her feet, to the imminent peril of the coffee, and Cyril followed suit, in time to see his darling caught in her grace's motherly embrace.

"Oh, you wicked, good-for-nothing child!" she exclaimed; "they have nearly frightened me out of my life between them! Mrs. Weston, why don't you beat her? She deserves to be shut up in a dark cupboard on bread and water! Let me sit down; the stories I have heard since six o'clock this morning, for that girl of mine, of course, came to me at once, and nearly killed me with the shock! She would have it that you had run away with one of the keepers, that you had not only eloped with him, but that he had the audacity to marry you!"

Edna blushed and laughed.

"You laugh—you heartless girl! It is all very well for you—but, I tell you, every soul about the place is full of it! and what is more, they will have it that that ne'er-do-well favorite of mine, Cyril More, is back! I wouldn't wait a moment, not even for breakfast, but came on directly. Of course, you laugh and say that I might have known it was false, but they were all so full of it and so certain, that I was convinced against my will that there was something in it."

And now I find there isn't, I'll discharge that hussy of mine! The impudent mix declared that the bells were going to be rung—why, what's that?" she broke off, as the bells suddenly pealed out hilariously.

Edna was too startled and overwhelmed to speak, but Aunt Martha smiled and almost chuckled, if such a feat were possible for her.

"You needn't discharge your excellent maid, my dear grace!" Cyril said. "Eh! what! who's that?" exclaimed her grace, swinging round and staring at Cyril, whom she had not noticed in her excitement. "Why! can I believe my ears? Who are you, sir?" "Your grace has necessarily forgotten a scapegrace not worthy to be remembered," said Cyril, looking forward, his stalwart figure coming almost as Saxon and herculean in his tweed morning suit as it had done in the keeper's cord.

"What, Cyril More!" exclaimed the duchess. "Is it possible! And they said you were dead! Dead! I never saw anyone look more thoroughly alive in my life! Come nearer, you monster. Why, turning from one to the other, 'what are you doing here; why don't you go home, to the park, I mean? Ah, there's Edward—poor Edward; not that I pity him, I never liked him, and as for his wife—why, Cyril, haven't you brought a wife of your own?"

Cyril smiled exasperatingly.

"I've got one here already," he said, with his old laugh.

"Oh, you have, Mr. Impudence," said the duchess. "I warn you, swinging round to Mrs. Weston, 'this is the wickedest creature you ever met. He was the wickedest boy I ever knew—used to poach his father's preserves—not to speak of the castle ones, and join in every bit of mischief for miles around. And so you've got a wife, have you; and where is she, pray?—some Indian girl, I suppose, or a New Zealander, perhaps. Where is she?—you must let me see her, sir; they used to say that you set up for a connoisseur."

Cyril laughed his short laugh of keen enjoyment, and leaned against the mantelpiece to watch Edna's scarlet face and enjoy the scene.

"And so that's what they were ringing the bells about, not because you had eloped with the under keeper, my dear. Well, I now I'll have a cup of tea"—Cyril came forward to set it for her—for 'I'm terribly confused and upset. What could have set their tongues wagging to this tune? Why, let me look at you, child. Ah!"

And her grace suddenly clutched Edna's left hand and stared at it.

"What is that ring?"

Edna covered her face with her hand, as Cyril came forward with the tea cup.

"This ring—and—" "Cyril here; why, child, you've never been and let that scapegrace of mine marry you!"

"That's just it!" cried Cyril, gleefully. "There's no going back on that, as the Americans say. Which is it, your grace—Indian squaw or New Zealander?"

"Neither, Mr. Impudence!" retorted her grace, hugging Edna. "They are

what you deserve, but you've got an angel."

(To be Continued.)

The Old Marquis;

OR, The Girl of the Cloisters

CHAPTER I. IN THE SUNLIGHT.

OUR forefathers, those extremely wise forefathers who are always held up to us foolish ones as examples and shining lights, had a custom of inscribing over the doors, or the fire-places of their principal rooms, some inscription from the philosophers or poets which was supposed to remind them that man is mortal, and that honesty is the best policy.

If my Lord Farintosh, Marquis of Farintosh, and Earl of Fane, and possessor of other titles 'too numerous and lengthy to mention, had followed this more or less useful custom, he might have inscribed in letters of black on every room of Fane Abbey the well known lines:

"The gods are just, and of our pleasure take their vicage. Make instruments to scourge us."

For my lord, the marquis, had been an exceedingly bad man. There was scarcely any pleasant vice in the dark catalogue of vices of which he had not been guilty.

Consequently the gods, now in his old age, scourged him with melancholia, and with that particularly unpleasant disease which moralists term "remorse," but which, alas for the moralists, is too often nothing more dignified than chronic indigestion!

My lord, the marquis, lived for the best part of the year at Fane Abbey; occasionally, say for a week or two in the height of the season, he went up to town and stayed at the great house in Park Lane, but the greater part of the twelve months he lived like a hermit, shut up in the four walls of the Abbey, dwelling on the past, cursing the present, and like all men of his type, dreading the future.

Now, if any one has drawn a mental picture of the great marquis as a decrepit, wizen-faced old ogre, always attired in a dingy dressing gown and buried in the depths of an armchair, that mental picture is a totally erroneous one.

The marquis was very little over sixty; he was tall and straight, and notwithstanding his white hair, handsome. His smile was particularly sweet, and his voice soft and musical; and he was always, when dressed, attired with the greatest neatness. It may safely be affirmed that he would no more have thought of appearing in his dressing-gown than in a suit of tar and feathers. To complete the picture, I may add that his hands were as small and as white as a woman's, and that one foot was equally shapely; the other was too often hidden in the thick fannel bindings demanded by the tyrant gout.

In his youth Lord Farintosh had been one of the most charming and fascinating of men, and the habit had clung to him in his age, and it was only those whose duty compelled them to be near him who knew how bitter and hard and fierce a devil possessed him—a devil that smiled and smiled, and spoke softly as a rule, and only occasionally broke bounds and leaped out roaring and spitting fire.

The Abbey was a fitting abode for so great a man. It was a long, irregular pile which had sheltered many a holy man and gentle Sister of Charity until dear, good King Henry the Eighth, who was as pious a man as he was devoted and faithful a husband, drove the nuns out and bestowed the Abbey on a Farintosh, long since dead and gone.

It lay in a pleasant little valley of the Berkshire hills, just within comfortable distance of London, and amid scenery which is not to be beaten for sylvan prettiness if one travels the whole world over.

In front of the long, straggling, red-bricked house stretched a red-tiled terrace, from which one descended to wide reaches of velvety lawns, that faded away into a park, beyond which were the Abbey farms and the village of Fanehurst.

The marquis was a king in this part of the country; his will was supreme, and his very person held in reverence, though, or perhaps because, it was so seldom visible to his tenants and laborers. For when the marquis came to or left the Abbey he

EE SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE EE



THE DOCTOR: "My yes, restless and feverish. Give him a Steedman's Powder and he'll soon be all right."

EE STEEDMAN'S SOOTHING POWDERS EE
Contain no Poison

Invariably traveled in a close carriage, which whirled him through the village and up the drive to the house, velling him as completely as if it were a hearse, and he in a coffin inside it.

Very few even of the servants at the Abbey ever saw or held speech of their master, for the apartments in which he dwelt were divided from the rest of the building by doors of which he and his valet alone kept the keys. His meals were served in a small sitting-room adjoining his dressing-room, and attended only by the valet and butler, an old man who had been in the Fane service since the present marquis was a boy.

No woman was ever allowed to penetrate into these apartments, for women his lordship held in abhorrence, notwithstanding that in his youth he had done them homage and won their love.

Beyond these private apartments, and shut off from them by the huge double doors, were the state rooms and a magnificent library. The domestic offices were situated in a wing of comparatively recent date.

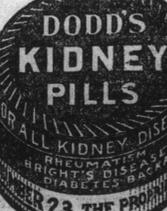
The library was on the ground floor, opening on to the terrace. It was a handsome room, not lofty, and not over-well lighted, but filled with choice, and, in some cases, unique volumes, and having some masterpieces of the old masters. Leading from the library was a smaller room, three sides of which were hung with tapestry, the fourth had an arrangement of old and costly china and pieces of ancient armor, which had been worn by the Fanes of the middle ages. This smaller room was called the china-room; into neither of these rooms did the marquis ever come.

There were some admirable horses in the stables, and well-appointed carriages in the coach houses, but the lord and master thereof never used them save when he was coming to or going from the Abbey. There were hosts of servants—cooks, house-maids, footmen, grooms, and stable-boys, but they were apparently retained to wait upon one another, and as the marquis never complained, they were perfectly satisfied.

One fine June morning the sun streamed down upon the front of the grand old place, lighting up the dark corners, and causing the peacocks to stride out upon the terrace and spread their many-colored tails; it peered into the shaded windows of the marquis' apartments, and at last glided round to the tall windows of the library, and, piercing the sun-blinds, threw broad patches upon the carpet of velvet pile.

One of its golden beams fell upon the figure of a young girl, who, standing there lighting up the center of the solemn silence, looked like a vision of one of the poets on the bookshelves. In simple truth, she might well have served as the heroine of a poem, for she was wondrously beautiful. Longfellow, for instance, might have had her in mind when he wrote of the maid standing on the brink that divides girlhood from womanhood, for she was but a girl, and yet with something in her lithe graceful figure that spoke eloquently of promised womanhood.

(To be Continued.)



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Italy Critical Situation

mand—

AN ITALIAN THREAT.

PARIS, March 22.—The Italian delegation to the Peace Conference has unanimously decided to withdraw from the Conference. The move is assigned to Italy, and is contemporaneously with the conclusion of peace.

THE RHINE THE KEYSTONE.

PARIS, March 22.—The Rhine is our line of defence. I do not demand its occupation, but if we do not secure a military frontier we will have no security. This statement was made by Marshal Foch in an interview with the Matin today in discussing the terms of the war. The Marshal was the wonderful soldier who we have had faith and never to be repented. We signed the armistice in spite of the certainty of crushing German armies to avoid killing more men and because it gave us something necessary to a French victory.

RECEIVED FAVORABLY.

LONDON, March 22.—The representatives of the mine owners met last night discussed the coal commission, but no decision was reached. It was stated, however, that the Sankey report created a favorable impression as a business document, and the general view was that a three-fold strike has been averted. The transport and mail services are a notable victory, and it is believed the Government is meeting with the miners and the railway men in a spirit which promises a peaceful settlement.

REPARATION CLAIMS.

PARIS, March 22.—Further information regarding the reparations conference here yesterday between Premier Lloyd George and Clemenceau and President Wilson became available today. Concerning the portion of the Allied reparations claims against Germany to amount to about a billion dollars, it was learned that the proposal was to spread the payment over forty years. On this point the principle with interest was amount to eighty billion dollars, the utmost that can be expected. A serious division of opinion exists as to the allotment of damages among the Allied Powers. The French are in favor of the destruction of industrial regions, while the British are in an allotment on the basis of costs. It is generally conceded that France has suffered the largest material loss, while Great Britain exposed the largest burden of the war on her people. The United States has put in a maximum claim for life and property during the war aggregating a little less than a billion dollars.

PEACE IN A MONTH.

PARIS, March 22.—When informed of a statement by Colonel House to British newspapers last night that the Germans were expected at Versailles in the next few weeks and it will be a matter of eight.

PARIS, March 22.—A semi-official German note explaining the reason for breaking off negotiations at Posen, says it has been impossible to reach agreement, especially regarding



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