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The Old Marquis

The Girl of the Cloisters

CHAPTER XXXII.
IN THE DOCTOR'S CARE.

CLIFFORD REVEL had, for once in a way, spoken the truth. Edith Drayton was ill. For months past she had been subjected to a strain which would have brought most women to the ground in a very short time. It was only her indomitable will and strength that had sustained her. But at last she had yielded before the intense mental pressure, the misery of her position. To love a man, to know that he loved another woman; to spend days and nights fluctuating between the hope of supplanting her and the despair attending the idea of falling in the attempt; to learn suddenly that he was married, lost to her forever; and then to discover that he was not married and that there was still a chance of winning him! All this had been her lot, and added to this the fact that a man whom she loathed and feared had got her in his power, and was gradually but surely winding his net closer and closer around her, so that soon she would find it impossible to escape. The doctor said it was low fever, and talked learnedly of the amount of waste that takes place in the human system during the long course of heated ball-rooms, late hours, indigestible refreshments and unhealthy excitement; and Edith lay back with her eyes shining luminously and her white face and smiled with weary scorn.

It was not the late hours or the ices and champagne of fashionable life that had laid her low. It was the wear and tear of heart and brain. She could have told him in a few words what the matter was; she would have said:

"Doctor, you can not minister to a mind diseased. I love a man who loves and thinks he is wedded to another woman. I am loved by a man I hate and loathe, and from whom I fear I cannot escape. The man I love

is to ride a race in which he will probably lose his life. All day I see him, the man I love, in my mind's eye, and always happy by the side of the woman who thinks herself his wife. That tortures me. At night when I lie down to sleep I see him still, and this time lying dead at my feet. So that I am tortured day and night. Give me the desire of my life; snatch me from the clutch of Clifford Revel, and I will be as well as Hygieia herself!"

Alas! one can not tell the doctor one's heart and mental ailments; and so, poor man, he feels our pulses and sends us bottles of medicine and doubtless wonders why he can not cure us.

So she lay, supine and motionless, with no desire for anything save death and forgetfulness; and poor Mrs. Drayton, who understood her daughter about as well as she understood Arabic, grew frightened and pitiable and utterly distraught.

Clifford Revel called twice a day, and sent up great bunches of fresh flowers to the sick room, in each of which bunch lay a concealed note full of passionate love and sorrow for her; notes which she read when her mother was out of the room, and crushed with spasmodic detestation and fury. The days rolled on; it wanted but three weeks of the Badmore race, and still she lay, baffling the doctor and worrying Mrs. Drayton; and then something wrought a cure.

"My dear," said Mrs. Drayton, coming up to her as she lay on the sofa of her room, her eyes fixed on vacancy, her white arm hanging down inertly, "here is a visitor for you."

"I want no visitor, mother," she replied, coldly.

"But—but this is— My dear, I told her I thought you wouldn't see her, but she begged me to come up and take her love."

"Her? Do you think I want a woman to chatter with me, mother?" with an icy smile.

"But I don't think she will chatter, dear—she seems such a sweet young thing—"

Edith closed her eyes and turned her head aside apathetically, and Mrs. Drayton, after waiting a minute, went downstairs.

A minute or two afterwards Edith

heard the door open, and, without looking round, said, wearily: "Have you sent her away?"

"No, dear," said a softer, sweeter voice than Mrs. Drayton's. "I would not go, you see. Don't be angry, Edith—"

Edith Drayton raised herself, and turned crimson, staring at Lela as if she were a vision of evil; then, with a great effort, she forced a smile, and held out her hand.

"Is it you?" she said huskily. "I did not know—"

Lela took her hand, and bent over her and kissed her, a kiss which Edith took with a shudder.

"You are not angry, dear, are you?" asked Lela, sinking down on the floor beside her. "You must be angry with me and Edgar—the white face crimsoned again—"not with poor Mrs. Drayton."

"Why did she not say who it was?" demanded Edith, with a forced smile, her dark eyes scanning the lovely, fresh and, ah! happy face with grudging admiration and veiled envy.

"Because"—Lela blushed—"because I did not give her my name. Edgar—Well, you know he does not wish it known that we are married?" she whispered, softly.

"He is wise," said Edith, under her breath.

"What do you mean? Oh, yes, because of the marquis; that is why I did not tell her. But I can not help it if you are angry; I felt that I could not stay away while you were so ill."

"Who told you I was ill?" demanded Edith.

"Mr. Clifford Revel," said Lela. "We did not know that you were so ill as you are until this morning."

"I am not ill—not very," said Edith. "I—I am knocked up. You are not ill, at any rate," she added, her eyes wandering grudgingly over the lovely face, with its rose blush of health.

Lela laughed softly.

"No; but then I am not overworked by a fashionable life; I am a mere nobody."

"Are you not my Lady Fane?" asked Edith, with a swift glance.

"Ah, yes," said Lela. "But I do not lead the life of a lady of title—I am glad to say."

"Glad?"

"Yes, very! I should not be half so happy as I am now in Edgar's rooms. I dread the hour when we shall leave them! But I did not come here to talk about myself, Edith."

"You can not talk about me; there is nothing respecting myself of any interest."

"Oh, Edith!" with a smile of reproach. "When I know that you are one of the leaders of fashion, whom everybody knows and admires. Why, do I not see your photograph in all the stationers' windows? Mr. Clifford Revel says that you have almost set the fashion in dress this season!"

"Mr. Clifford Revel honors me by making me the topic of his conversation," said Edith, with a bitter smile. "And now that you have said all that you can say about me, talk about yourself."

"Not yet, at any rate. Are you better to-day, dear?" asked Lela, who thought how little changed the imperious woman of the world was from the imperious school-girl whom she remembered.

"Better, yes!" replied Edith. "Do I look ill?"

Lela was silent.

Edith laughed bitterly.

"If you knew it, I look a thousand times better since you came in; there is a touch of color in my face; I can see it in the glass there. But I have been ill. See here," and she raised her arm and let her bracelet fall from her wrist downward; "a week ago that bracelet would not have fallen an inch; my arm is so much the thinner. Another month of this and I should be—so says the doctor—where they do not wear bracelets."

"Edith!" exclaimed Lela, shocked and pitiful. "What is it? Why do you stay in London? Why do you not go away to the seaside—anywhere?"

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Joying it. He is so kind and thoughtful!

"Ah!" breathed Edith, shading her eyes with her hand to hide the envious feeling that gleamed within them.

"I can not tell you how thoughtful! He seems to know every wish I have before I scarcely know it myself! They used to say most men were selfish; if it be so, he must be very, very different to most men! I wish that he would not give up so much for me! Sometimes, when I think of all that he has sacrificed, and all that he has risked by—by making me his wife, I feel that I have committed a great wrong to be so happy!"

She paused, with a blush and a smile.

"There! I am speaking of myself again," she said.

"No, of—of Lord Edgar," said Edith. "But I forgot; you and he are one now!" she added, with a malicious accent that was not quite concealed, for Lela looked up with a faint, questioning surprise. "Man and wife are one, so if you talk of him, you talk of yourself, you know," said Edith, as if explaining.

A happy light came into Lela's eyes, and her head drooped, and she was silent.

Edith Drayton, looking from under her hand, felt a sharp pang of envy and malice. Then she asked herself the question: Was it possible that Lela could have no suspicion of the awful truth?

"How long are you going to keep your marriage secret?" she asked.

Lela started, as if waking from a reverie.

"Only a few days longer. A few days, Edgar says. He is waiting for something to happen," she smiled. "I don't know what it is; but it is to make all the difference to us; it will make further concealment altogether unnecessary."

"He means the race," thought Edith, "and he has not told her of it," and a faint thrill of evil satisfaction ran through her at the thought that he should conceal something from this beautiful wife of his.

"And you have not minded being hidden away?" she asked. "Some girls, most girls would have been anxious to have been acknowledged as Lady Fane, the wife of the heir of Farintosh; to have tasted all the glories of her position."

(To be Continued.)

Fashion Plates.

A COMFORTABLE PLAY GARMENT.



2763—Galatea, gingham, seer-sucker, percale, flannelette, drill, repp and poplin are good for this design. Front of waist and bloomers are cut in one, but the back is in two pieces. The sleeve may be finished at wrist length with a hard cuff, or short, in loose style.

The Pattern is cut in 4 sizes 1, 2, 3 and 4 years. Size 4 requires 3 yards of 36 inch material. A pattern of this illustration mailed to any address on receipt of 10 cents in silver or stamps.

A POPULAR SUIT FOR THE SMALL BOY.



2787—This style may be developed in gingham, drill, khaki, linen, flannel, galatea, or serge. The blouse may be of contrasting material. The Pattern is cut in 4 sizes: 2, 3, 4, and 5 years. Size 4 will require 1 1/2 yards of 27 inch material for the blouse and 1 3/4 yards for the trousers.

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Lela smiled and blushed.
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FRANCE IS FIRM.
PARIS, June 11.
The determination of France not to consent to any material change in the Treaty with Germany was clearly defined to-day, after the meeting of Four Council and various commissions which failed to reach any solution of the deadlock on important points on which differences of opinion have arisen. Clemenceau especially is firm in his refusal to agree to the admission of Germany to the League of Nations immediately.
BOLSHEVIK SUCCESS.
NEW YORK, June 11.
Bolshevik forces on Monday captured Ufa, recently taken by the troops of Admiral Kolchak after three days of sanguinary fighting, according to a Russian wireless despatch received here to-day.
THE ANSWER.
PARIS, June 11.
The reply to the German counter-proposals agreed upon by the Peace Conference refuses the German request for a mandate for former German colonies. A lengthy memorandum gives the reason for refusal and explains the operations of the League of Nations on colonial matters.
UNFORTUNATE CLASHES.
COBLENZ, June 11.
Hostility between the Americans and German civilians in the occupied region, which has been increasing recently, has resulted in additional clashes during the last few days. In one instance an American was killed and in other encounters in various places of the occupied zone four were wounded. At Third Army Headquarters it was said that the number of Germans killed by Americans in fights during the six months of occupation totalled no more than five.
FULL EXPLANATION.
PARIS, June 11.
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