

THE FAIR IMPOSTOR.

CHAPTER XI
WINNING TRUE HEARTS.
(Continued.)

ON the whole, Lillian had changed wonderfully; that low, musical laugh grew less rare and more heartfelt; and she talked more, much to Sir Talbot's delight. "I may be partial," he said one day to Harold, when Lillian had left them to their wine; "I may be partial, but I am inclined to believe that Lillian is a clever woman—not a half clever woman, mind. I hate, and always did, abominate that sort, because a half-clever woman is always trying to show her wit. A wholly clever woman restrains and represses it, giving you just a touch here and there, rapier-like, or, better still, like a rare cordial, a thimbleful at a time from a full bottle. I don't think I ever met a woman—a girl, by gad! she is no more!—who could say so many really clever things as Lillian has said to-night."

Harold nodded approval, but with a half-sad smile. Was not the star soaring still higher in the empyrean, still further beyond his reach? At times, as when she had first arrived, fits of profound silence and abstraction fell upon her. Sir Talbot and Harold could always tell when they were coming on by the straightening of the dark brows over the lowered lids, and the far-away and almost hard look which robbed the lovely eyes of half their beauty, while it lent them a tragic expression, worthy of Rachel. When she felt these fits were coming on, she generally took her hat and went down to the churchyard, which lay, like a picture of Birket Foster's, in a hollow behind the village.

And there no one followed her, except in spirit; Sir Talbot always shut himself up in his study until they told him, in a whisper, that Miss Lillian had returned. Then he would go out and meet her, and look into her eyes, with an anxious, questioning look in his pale face, which look would instantly disappear if she smiled at him. Still, though the old man's love for her increased daily, hourly, he felt, with untold mortification and remorse, that he was no nearer understanding her. Between them, at times, seemed to rise an impassible barrier, a veil which, strive how he would, he could not tear away. "Let me win her whole heart before I die," was his nightly prayer.

Talk of punishment being productive of remorse and true penitence! How bitter had been this man's punishment, and how small his real penitence and remorse, until love stepped in! Love! Of all the gods, the most powerful, before there must all men bow, if but you come in their lives!

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So the days wore round to that toward which so many anxious eyes were turned, the day of the dramatic fete at the Towers. The duchess, with her usual good nature, had intended throwing open the banquet rooms and giving the guests a dinner. "Something substantial," said the duke. But Gerald emphatically opposed any such idea. "What?" he said; "you don't go to dine at the theater?" "Except at the Galety," murmured the duke. "Let them come straight from their own places, and take their numbered seats as they would at a real theater. If you like to give them anything to eat while they are here—"

"Of course I must, my dear!" said her grace. "Do you want them fainting in the middle of the performance?" "Then fit up some refreshment bars—"

"My dear Gerald!" repeated Gerald, unflinchingly; "in the anterooms, and let the men go and get it for the ladies!" "That's it, your grace," said Harold, with his frank smile; "and let some of the prettiest of the maid-servants stand behind the bars, eh, Gerald?" "I wonder you don't want me to send Flitters, the butler, and a couple of footmen, down the stairs with bottles of beer and lemonade and cakes!" said her grace, pathetically. "But, as usual, Gerald had his way, and the anteroom was piled up with genuine refreshment bars, at which, however, there was something more than the stale buns, flinty pastry, dried-up chocolate and fearful liquors which make the name of 'refreshment' room at the theaters such a hideous mockery. As early as half-past seven carriages began to arrive, eight o'clock being the time for the commencement of the performance. The guests were shown into a saloon adjoining the theater, and received by the duchess and Lady Warner. None of the performers put in an appearance before the curtain. Meanwhile, in a suit of rooms behind the large saloon or the theater, the actors were dressing. There was no confusion. "If they can manage to dress and prepare in the small spaces only which we know some of the best London theaters possess, surely we can do so without muddle and confusion, with nearly all the Grange at our disposal!" said Gerald. "Let us be systematic and punctual. If we can't act, we can keep time!" Long before seven o'clock Laura Warner and some others of the most

nervous ones were dressed, and at a quarter past there was an anxious cry for Lillian, who had not arrived. At half-past, however, the Woodleigh carriage drew quietly up to the side entrance, and Lillian, closely wrapped up, was almost lifted out by Sir Talbot. He looked anxiously and lovingly at her as she leaned upon his arm on their way to the greenroom, followed by her maid. "Are you sure you have everything you want, my darling? Is there anything I can—or Harold? I'd better wait and see," he said, opening the door of the room to which none but the performers were admitted. "This is so new to you; I'm afraid you may be overdone!" She turned her face away slightly. "Do not be anxious on my account," she said; "I am very strong, and shall enjoy it all, and I am sure not to be overdone!" "Ah!" he said, only half convinced; "you don't know how great a sham those theatrical affairs are! And Juliet, too, such an exhausting character! I almost wish I had not consented to your acting, my darling!" With a smile, she drew her arm from his. "It will not exhaust me," she said; "then she bent slightly forward, to meet his kiss, and then went in. The room was full, not to say crowded; all the characters for the first play were dressed and waiting. A buzz of conversation, half nervous, half excited, rose on all sides, and for a moment her entrance was unnoticed, then, as she glided forward, some one spoke her name, and Gerald came toward her with overbrimming eagerness. His pale, spiritual face was all aglow; his artistic sense of delight reached that point when ecstasy becomes a mingled pleasure and pain. For a full minute he stood gazing at her marvelous beauty, never so fully revealed and enshrined as in this delicate, creamy satin, with its antique lace and pearls, then his head drooped for a moment. When he raised it again, the boyish face was white and quivering. "Oh, Heaven!" he murmured, "bravely! I would give all that remains of my short life to be your Romeo, my Juliet!" None heard the piteous heart-wail but she. With a sudden, little movement, she bent and laid her white hand on his arm, her face white as his, her eyes alight with some subtle, mysterious emotion. "And I," she said, in a low voice that thrilled him, "would give my life to prevent it!" No further word was possible. They were surrounded by a crowd, full of amazed admiration and wonder—admiration for her loveliness and won-

der at the easy grace with which she wore the strange costume, while theirs seemed to sit as consciously upon them as if they wore a coat of mail.

Presently a little lane was formed, and Laura Warner, dressed for Julia, stood opposite her, the two beauties confronting each other, too quick to be noticed, distorted Laura's face, and her thoughtful eyes beamed with reluctant admiration; then, as she glided up to her and kissed her, she said: To be continued.

Dinners With Their Majesties

Table Etiquette the King Mayn't Forget.

Dinner has become a much more elaborate meal at Marlborough House than it used to be. To start with, the number of servants who wait at table have been more than doubled, and each is arrayed in the full scarlet-and-white livery of the Court; each, of course, will wear whilst the Court is in mourning a black band on the left sleeve.

When his Majesty was Prince of Wales only three servants were on duty at dinner, but now the number has increased to eight, under the control of a Groom of Chambers, who does not wait himself, but directs the movements of his subordinates. The King is waited on by a special servant, who does not attend to anyone else at table. Their Majesties, as Prince and Princess of Wales, would often dine quite en famille; but now the Royal party at dinner seldom consists of less than a dozen.

Forty-Five Minute Meals. Dinner is served in the large dining-room on the first floor at a quarter to nine. At half-past eight the members of the Royal Household who have been commanded to be present assemble in what is known as the equestrian drawing-room, through which the King and Queen enter. A few minutes before dinner-hour the equerry in personal attendance announces that their Majesties are about to enter the room. Everyone present rises. The King and Queen bow when they come in, and then at once lead the way to the dining-room. The dining-table is oval shaped; the King sits at the centre on one side, and Queen Mary at the other, the chief members of the Household present sitting next to their Majesties on either side. King George likes the late monarch, greatly dislikes a prolonged meal, and dinner at Marlborough House, except when guests are present, does not last more than three-quarters of an hour. On ordinary occasions the meal is a simple one consisting of rarely more than half a dozen courses. The dinner-service usually used at Marlborough House is made of the finest Dresden China, and in the centre of each plate is a gold crown. The dishes and dish covers are all silver. At State dinner-parties a massive silver dinner-service is used.

There is no music at dinner on ordinary occasions, but when there are guests the band specially attached to the Court, known as the King's Band, or a dozen members of one of the Guards' bands, play in the hall. Household Receptions. The King always rises from the table first when dinner is finished, and then the Queen; when his Majesty was Prince of Wales, the Princess of Wales rose first from the table. The King and Queen then lead the way to one of the reception-rooms, usually the Crimson drawing-room, followed by their suites. At eleven o'clock the members of the Household, with the exception of one lady-in-waiting and an equerry, are dismissed, and the King and Queen retire to their private apartments. The King and Queen, since the death of King Edward, have, of course, had no guests at Marlborough House, except Royalties and State officials, but their Majesties on several occasions have held Household receptions after dinner. The late monarch was responsible for inaugurating these Household receptions at Buckingham Palace, shortly after his accession, with a view to bringing together the members of the Royal establishment, many of whom were not well acquainted with each other. These receptions are quite informal, and afford the King and Queen an opportunity of discussing with the various members of their Household a variety of matters in connection with the future management of the Royal establishment which their Majesties would not have time to do during the day.

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G. P. O., July 18, 1910.

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