

A Millionaire; Countess Westerleigh.

CHAPTER XIV.
(To be Continued.)

"By George, Sen, you have hit it this time! It is magnificent! It's herself, alive and breathing! Superb!"

Senley Tyers lay back and shrugged his shoulders.

"Think so? Thanks. I like to have your praise, Vane, though I am painfully conscious all the time that you know nothing about it."

Vane laughed, his eyes still on the picture.

"But it is good, isn't it? You yourself know it is, don't you?" he said. "I should think Lady Florence must be pleased with it. By George I should be, if you were painting it for me! This will make a sensation at the Academy, Sen."

"Yes; the fools who know nothing will crowd round it and talk much," said Tyers. "And you think it is like her? You ought to know. You are an old friend of Lady Florence, aren't you, Vane?"

Vane nodded. He seemed scarcely able to withdraw his eyes from the portrait.

"Yes," he said, "quite old friends. I like her—Oh, by the way, I hope you and she get on better."

Senley Tyers looked down at the rug upon which his feet rested.

"Yes; I think we are more amiable," he said.

"That was all nonsense about the handkerchief, you know," said Vane.

"Perhaps it was," assented Tyers; then, after a pause, he said, with well-simulated carelessness: "Did it ever strike you as remarkable that so beautiful a woman should remain unmarried, Tempest?"

Vane thought a moment.

"Well, I suppose it is rather odd," he said, as if the idea had not occurred to him before. "But she is still very young, isn't she? It's her own fault, I should think, if she hasn't married. I believe I've heard that she has had several offers. One or two men, I know, were mad about her—stark, staring mad."

He thought a moment; then he laughed.

"It's rather strange, that," he said. "What?" asked Senley Tyers.

"Why, that when Lady Florence does strike, she strikes deep. The fellows who fall in love with her just rave about her. I remember one man who used to tremble and turn pale when she entered the room, and whose head went round like a top when she spoke to him."

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CHAPTER XV.

The ninth came round, and with it Vane's supper-party. Ninety-eight St. James's Street was run by a Mrs. Porter, and her husband. She had been a cook, "and a good cook, too," in a noble family, and her husband had been a valet. They had saved money, married, and taken No. 98 St. James's Street, and made a very comfortable living out of the young fellows who rented their rooms.

Vane was a favorite of both, and Mrs. Porter was always ready to exert herself in his behalf. When he gave a spread she invariably cooked the dishes with her own hands, and Porter waited at table, looking like a clergyman, "or more so," as Lord Wally remarked.

Porter had dropped into the habit of playing valet to Vane, and was one of those persons who almost felt aggrieved and sorrowful when Vane paid his long-owing bill.

It was a choice gathering of fine spirits that filled his pretty sitting-room. In addition to Dacre, Glossop, and Raymond, were a couple of Guardsmen; old Hubbard, the best story-teller in London; and the junior



Senley Tyers looked at him with grave earnestness.

"She is very lovely," he said, as if absent. "You never felt like that, Tempest?" he added, suddenly.

Vane laughed.

"No," he said—"lucky for me. The divine Florence is not for the likes of a poor devil such as I am. She is fit to be a duchess—will be, I should think."

"No doubt," said Senley Tyers.

He rose and took up his brush and valet.

"I'll clear out," said Vane. "By the way, Sen, I want you to come to supper with some fellows at my room in the ninth. It's supposed to be a kind of farewell spread, though when and where I'm going I haven't the least idea."

"Perhaps I could tell you the approximate date, if I knew how much money you have left," said Senley Tyers, with a cynical laugh.

Vane colored.

"Oh! I'm still quite flush," he said. By the way, Sen—he hesitated, and laid his hand on Tyers' shoulder—"If you should happen to be short and want any coin—don't you know?"

Senley Tyers smiled.

"Thanks," he said; "that is like you. If I were a sensible man, I should accept a few hundred, and save them from the fate of the rest, but I'm not sensible. I've plenty of money, my dear Vane. The Duchess of Mudshire paid me for what she calls her portrait, yesterday. That also will be a success, as she admitted, though she nearly went as far as to call me a brute when she gave me the duke's check. I had offered to paint her as she really was, one afternoon, and she didn't like it."

Vane laughed.

"Geniuses are permitted a certain amount of eccentricity and side, aren't they, Sen?" he said. "Well, bye-bye. Don't forget the ninth; and he went down the stairs, humming light-heartedly, his cigarette in his lips, his hat a little on one side, his eyes shining brightly; and Senley Tyers dropped into a chair again, and shading his eyes, looked long and thoughtfully at the lovely face on the canvas.

"What was he hiding?" he muttered. "Something happened down here in the west that he did not tell me, and does not mean to tell me. That won't do. You must not be permitted to keep any secrets from me, my decoy duck."

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Juggins, as Lord Arthur Glenham was invariably called.

This youth, of little more than twenty-two summers, had contrived to run through a couple of hundred thousand pounds in his short manhood, and was popularly supposed not to have a penny left, though he was still the best dressed man in London, drove a four-in-hand, and was always ready to bet on any conceivable object; and it may be added, that he had never been happy or in better spirits than at the present time.

They came in well up to time—twelve o'clock, laughing and chaffing, presenting the spectacle of a group of strong, able-bodied men who had never done a day's work in their lives; dandies, epicures, done in the world's eye, and, to the casual observer, of no value whatever. And yet it was just such men as these who fought their way through the Crimea, who starved and rotted and died in the trenches before Sebastopol without a murmur, or rode up the fatal pass of Balaklava with a laugh and a jest on their lips; and it is just such men as these who will do it again whenever they are called upon.

Taller than them all, Vane, turned out by Porter in faultless evening-dress, received them with that frank and light-hearted warmth and gaiety which made him such a perfect host and went far to account for his great popularity.

"How do, boys?" he said, as they came in. "Baby, you come and sit by me; Glossop, you're answerable for the spread—you and Mrs. Porter. By love! you should have seen her face when I handed her your menu. Mr. Glossop must think I'm a French cook," she said.

"She's better than French—she's Irish," said Glossop, sententiously, as he scanned the table. "I'll back an Irish woman, who's learned her business, against any French chef, oh, she's all right; you tell her I said so, Porter," and he nodded to the gratified husband.

Glossop's confidence seemed to be well placed. The supper was pronounced a masterpiece, from the red velvet en papillote to the rice pudding with Vane's initials in ginger. The grilled bones were voted perfect, and the claret and champagne, both of famous vintages, satisfied even Mr. Hubbard, an authority on all kinds of drinks.

It was a merry party. The Baby, with his beautiful complexion flushed like that of a girl, at her first dance, recounted his experiences of a day on drag driven by a green hand, and imitated the screams and cries of the omen as the coach turned over like a turtle—"Boys, just like the turtle," gave you my word. Madge Brabazon, the Coronet, was on the box, and she was the first off. She clung to me like a limpet. 'Oh, Baby,' she wailed, 'I've broken both legs, and I've got a dance to-night. What shall I do? you could have heard her a mile off, picked her up and persuaded her that she hadn't got a fracture about her; but I had to make her dance first, or should have seen us footing it olemnly in the road with the rest of the coach-load, screaming and sobbing and the horses on their sides kicking and plunging."

"That reminds me," began Hubbard, he recounted; and off he started on a story that sent the party into fits of laughter.

Story succeeded story, as dish succeeded dish and wine followed wine. Vane sat at the head of the table, his

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handsome face lighted up with its frank, debonaire smile. He was never happier than when he was surrounded by happiness of his own providing. He listened to one and another, and joined in the free laughter which was at its height, when the door opened and Senley Tyers entered.

He was in evening dress, like the rest, but somehow it seemed to differ from theirs. There was a certain overdone neatness and preciseness about the neck-tie, perhaps, which marked it off and distinguished it.

Vane beckoned him to a chair, which Porter placed at the table, and shook hands, and the rest of the men nodded and went on almost without a break with their light chaff and laughter.

"What made you so late?" asked Vane.

"I thought you said one o'clock," replied Senley Tyers.

And he ate his supper almost in silence. No one seemed to pay any attention to him. He was like a man apart and outside the ring.

The supper was over at last, the table cleared, and as if by magic, he cards made their appearance.

Vane, as he moved to and fro, came upon Lord Wally and touched his arm.

"Steady young 'un," he said, in the tone an experienced man of the world uses to a junior. "Don't play high, specially with Dacre."

"All right, Tempest," said the boy, with his girlish smile. "I promise."

The men settled down—some to poker, some to baccarat. Vane joined the latter game. Senley Tyers, excusing himself on the score of ignorance, wandered around the room with a cigarette in his lips.

Vane looked round presently. He saw that Lord Raymond was at Dacre's table, and he rose and laid his arm on his shoulder. He would save him if he could.

"Go and take my place, Baby," he said.

The lad raised his flushed face exultingly for a moment, then got up. He did not dream of disobeying or refusing a request of his hero and model.

Dacre glanced at Vane, then nodded. "All right," he said; and Vane knew that his self-sacrifice would cost him dearly.

The play was high, grew higher. The rooms were warm, the wine circulated freely; the expert Porter filled the glasses with the silent precision of an automaton.

Suddenly, why or wherefore Vane will never know, the vision of the Witches' Caldron rose before him, and he saw, amidst the clouds of tobacco smoke, the face and form of Nora, and heard above the laughter and the hot, swift call of the cards, her clear, low, bell-like voice.

He played the wrong card and lost a heavy stake.

"Halloo, Tempest!" said Glossop. "What's the devil the matter with you? You had the ace!"

"I know," said Vane, apologetically. "I beg your pardon."

(To be Continued.)

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BY RUTH CARR

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There is the man who plays a splendid game when he finds himself on the flood tide of success but begins to lose heart and skill if the tide turns against him; and, on the other hand, there is the man who plays like fury when he is getting beaten but softens when he has begun to prosper.

Can't you imagine just how these two people will act in the face of failure or prosperity in the game of life?

Then there is the man who only tries to beat his opponent; and the man who also tries to beat his own game. There is the man who begins brilliantly but never advances far and there is the man who starts slowly and even deliberately sacrifices his first games to making experiments and learning how to do the thing just right. It takes him a longer time to come, but when he comes he comes fast.

There is the man who is so unbalanced that he will do anything to win.

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