

with business. She had to make all arrangements for the funeral, to order all the mourning, while Lady Darrell was supposed to be overwhelmed with sorrow in the retirement of her own room.

One fine spring morning, while the pretty bluebells were swaying in the wind, and the hawthorn was shining pink and white on the hedges, while the birds sang and the sun shone, Sir Oswald Darrell was buried, and the secret of what he had wished to say or have done was buried with him.

At Lady Darrell's suggestion, Captain Langton was sent for to attend the funeral. It was a grand and stately procession. All the *elite* of the country were there, all the tenantry from Audleigh Royal, all the friends who had known Sir Oswald and respected him.

"Was he the last of the Darrells?" one asked of another; and many looked at the stately, dark-eyed girl who bore the name, wondering how he had left the property, whether his niece would succeed him, or his wife take all. They talked of it in subdued whispers as the funeral cortege wound its way to the church, they talked of it after the coffin had been lowered into the vault, and they talked of it as the procession made its way back to Darrell Court.

As Lady Hampton said, it was a positive relief to open the windows and let the blessed sunshine in, to draw up the heavy blinds, to do away with the dark, mourning aspect of the place.

Everything had been done *en regle*—no peer of the realm could have had a more magnificent funeral. Lady Hampton felt that in every respect full honor had been done both to the living and the dead.

"Now," she wisely remarked, "there is nothing to be done, save to bear up as well as it is possible."

Then, after a solemn and dreary dinner, the friends and invited guests went away, and the most embarrassing ceremony of all had to be gone through—the reading of the will.

Mr. Ramsden, the family solicitor, was in attendance. Captain Langton, Lady Darrell, Lady Hampton, and Miss Darrell took their seats. Once or twice Lady Hampton looked with a smile of malicious satisfaction at the proud, calm face of Pauline. There was nothing there to gratify her—no queen could have assisted at her own dethronement with prouder majesty or prouder grace. Some of the old retainers, servants who had been in the family from their earliest youth, said there was not one who did not wish that Pauline might have Darrell Court.

Lady Darrell, clad in deepest mourning, was placed in a large easy-chair in the center of the group, her aunt by her side. She looked extremely delicate and lovely in her black sweeping robes.

Pauline, who evidently thought the ceremony an empty one as far as she was concerned, stood near the table. She declined the chair that Captain Langton placed for her. Her uncle was dead she regretted him with true, unfeigned, sincere sorrow; but the reading of his will had certainly nothing to do with her. There was not the least shadow on her face, not the least discomposure in her manner. To look at her one would never have thought she was there to hear the sentence of disinheritor.

Lady Darrell did not look quite so tranquil; everything was at stake for her. She held her dainty handkerchief lest the trembling of her lips should be seen.

Mr. Ramsden read the will, and its contents did not take any one much by surprise. The most important item was a legacy of ten thousand pounds to Captain Aubrey Langton. To Pauline Darrell was left an annuity of five hundred per annum, with the strict injunction that she should live at Darrell Court until her marriage; if she never married, she was to reside there until her death. To all his faithful servants Sir Oswald left legacies and annuities. To his well-beloved wife, Elinor, he bequeathed all else—Darrell Court, with its rich dependancies and royal revenues, his estate in Scotland, his house in town, together with all the valuable furniture, plate, jewelry, pictures, all the moneys that had accumulated during his life time—all to her, to hold at her will and pleasure; there was no restriction, no condition to mar the legacy.

To the foregoing, Sir Oswald had added a codicil; he left Miss Hastings one hundred per annum, and begged of her to remain at Darrell Court as companion to Lady Darrell and his niece.

Then the lawyer folded up the parchment, and the ceremony was ended.

"A very proper will," said Lady Hampton; "it really does poor dear Sir Oswald credit."

They hasten to congratulate Lady Darrell; but Captain Langton, it was noticed, forgot to do so—he was watching Pauline's calm unconcerned departure from the room.

#### CHAPTER XXIX.

##### WAITING FOR REVENGE.

There was a slight, only a very slight difference of opinion between Lady Darrell and her aunt after the reading of the will. Lady Hampton would fain have given up the Elms, and have gone to live at Darrell Court.

"Sir Oswald's will is a very just one," she said, "admirable in every respect; but I should never dream, were I in your place, Elinor, of keeping that proud girl here. Let her go. I will come and live with you. I shall make a better chaperon than that poor, faded Miss Hastings."

But Lady Darrell was eager to taste the sweets of power, and she knew how completely her aunt would take every vestige of it from her.

She declared her intention to adhere most strictly to the terms of the will.

"And aunt," she continued, with firmness quite new to her, "it would be much better, I think, for you to keep on the Elms. People might make strange remarks if you came here to live with me."

(To be continued.)

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