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CHAPTER XXXII.

"Indeed I knew nothing of the sort!" Lady Nora interrupts, sneeringly. "I did know that you treated him very badly, and burned his letter without even keeping the address, as I had to tell him when he asked me if you received it—that did not look like very devoted love! But there is no use talking about my boy. If neither of you have money, of course you cannot live together as Dallas Glynne and his wife should live. That is the end of it; and I am too wretched and grieved and worried to discuss it any more to-night, Yolande. You have your high-flown ideas of duty, I have my matter-of-fact, woman-of-the-world ideas; they would clash instantly, and I am worn out, and can't stand clashing or tormenting of any kind just now. I must try to sleep if I can, and have my poor head clear to face all the troubles and difficulties that beset me. Good-night, or rather good-morning, Yolande—there's the daylight, I see."

Yolande, dismissed with scant ceremony, gropes her way out of the room with a dazed, pained feeling that the world—her world—is all crumbling away beneath her feet.

Lady Nora, very chilly and sleepy, gets into her luxurious bed without delay, curls herself up under the satin-quilted eiderdown, her head nestling among the lace-trimmed pillows.

She does not wake until nearly ten o'clock, and then her maid brings her dainty breakfast of fragrant coffee and wafers of crisp toast, and boiled ham and poached eggs, all of which her ladyship enjoys immensely.

At two o'clock Lady Nora has her luncheon—a morsel of delicious salmon kedgeree and a cutlet and some pudding, and a couple of glasses of dry sherry—and about three o'clock she has her warm bath and dresses leisurely.

She puts on a soft, brocaded silk tea gown of a delicate heliotrope tint, with a quantity of beautiful old Irish lace—Limerick point—about the sleeves, and ruffled softly down the front from the neck to the feet. She wears her prettiest chevelure, and her soft, smooth cheeks are like a nectarine, and her eyebrows and eyelashes are delicately shaded. Her white hands are sparkling with rings, and she is a picture of elegant patrican well-preserved beauty as she rustles softly down the stairs in her shining purple silks and swooping lace-edged skirts.

Mr. Carter has been waiting these ten minutes to see her, her maid tells her.

"Any one else, Moodie" she asks, carelessly.

"Yes, my lady—Lady Pentreath; she is with Mrs. Glynne and Miss Dormer upstairs in Mr. Dormer's dressing-room," Moodie replies.

"Oh!" Lady Nora says, shrugging her shoulders, a frown and a flush marrying the serenity of her pretty face for a moment. "Any one else, Moodie?"

"Mademoiselle Gantier, my lady; and she asked if you would please see her for a minute when you came down. She is in the large drawing-room, my lady."

"And where is Mr. Carter?" Lady Nora asks, sharply and hurriedly.

"In the small room—your own sitting-room, my lady."

The delicate bloom on her ladyship's face deepens into a dull red of rage.

"Heavens," Moodie hears her mutter, grinding her teeth savagely, "is that woman in league with Satan? She is everywhere where she is not wanted!"

Severely elegant in appearance in her costume of plain, rich black silk and lace—perfect in fit and style—and her bonnet of crimson tulle, mademoiselle sits reading "Natural Law in the Spiritual World" as if she has not one troublous thought in connection with the petty cares of everyday life.

"Good-morning," Lady Nora says, briefly and not over civilly. "You wished to see me, I believe, mademoiselle?"

Mademoiselle bows gracefully and smiles sweetly.

"Good-morning, Lady Nora. Yes, I did. I am anxious about the poor, dear people here, you see." She speaks as if she were the beneficent patroness and protectress of the whole Dormer family. "It is a smash-up, you know," she adds, descending to broad vernacular—"a regular upset of everything, Lady Nora, as I told you yesterday evening. I am glad to see you are wise in time."

"What do you mean, pray?" Lady Nora asks, with chilling hauteur. "The fact that you have obtained some knowledge of my private affairs in some extraordinary manner gives you no right or title to advise me or presume to interfere——"

"You will persist in taking that tone with me, Lady Nora!" mademoiselle interrupts, arching her eyebrows and shrugging her shoulders. "It is very foolish of you. I am in no need of your friendship, I assure you; and you are giving yourself a lot of useless trouble in pretending to keep me at arms' length."

"I don't know whether you are friend or foe," Lady Nora mutters, half cowed. "Nobody can tell whether to trust you or nor. Mrs. Vavasor says so, too. You are in Lord Pentreath's confidence, and you are in Lady Pentreath's confidence; and now you seem to be in Joyce Murray's confidence, and——"

"I'm in everybody's confidence," mademoiselle finishes gayly. "I'm everybody's useful, humble friend, and help everybody out of their troubles to the utmost of my small ability."

"Everybody's friend!" Lady Nora repeats, in accents of scorn.

"I am!" mademoiselle says, undauntedly. "You can't say I am not yours, I'm sure. I have rescued your faithful adorer from perishing in the outer darkness of your coldness and disdain." She fairly giggles in malicious glee as she sees Lady Nora bite her lip vengefully. "Things were very bad with him, I assure you; he'd have done something desperate if I hadn't thrown myself into the breach. As it was, he was worrying Lord Pentreath's life out with letters about you and your cruelty and ingratitude and breach of faith. There—you know how a furious lover will talk, Lady Nora!"

Lady Nora is biting her lips mercilessly and clinching her jeweled fingers, and seemingly is on the verge of tears of rage.

"I consider there has been a shameful breach of faith on the part of Lord Pentreath," she says, in a half-choked voice. "I thought I could trust my own kinsman to keep the story of my troubles to himself. It was shameful of him! You have, of course, your own motives for all this, she adds, turning on mademoiselle and shaking with passion—"this prying and ferreting out of people's private affairs!"

"Of course I have," mademoiselle retorts, with modest assurance. "I am devoted to the interests of Lord and Lady Pentreath, who are my most kind and generous friends; and I want to make myself useful to them, and spare them trouble, and take the worries on myself, because they always say, 'We can trust you, Isabelle, to do things discreetly and delicately, and hear and see and say nothing.'"

"And where, pray," Lady Nora asks, her curiosity overcoming her spleen, "does your devotion to Miss Murray's interests come in? In piecing together a damaging story of her flirtation with Captain Glynne, and that foolish business of the rings, and all the rest of it"

(To be continued.)

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State Services Rendered by Chamberlain Family.

A remarkable family record within just over 40 years of politics is set up by Mr. Neville Chamberlain's appointment to the Treasury. Joseph Chamberlain was President of the Board of Trade and of the Local Government Board, and Colonial Secretary.

Mr. Austen has been Chancellor of the Exchequer twice, Indian Secretary Minister without portfolio, and Lord Privy Seal, apart from minor offices, Mr. Neville has had experience at the National Service Ministry, the Post Office, and the Ministry of Health.

It is noteworthy that they have served under Premiers as diverse as Gladstone, Salisbury, Lord Balfour, Mr. Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Bonar Law, and Mr. Baldwin.

Mr. Austen Chamberlain, who is holidaying in the Island of Eigg, is one of those who have suffered, as many public men do, from the attentions of the so-called harmless lunatic.

For many years a lady persisted in corresponding with members of his father's family, claiming close relationship. Then came the announcement of "Austen's" engagement. The lady promptly became convinced that she was the bride.

She wrote to the bride's mother saying she was coming home to prepare for the wedding, and did, in fact, arrive with her luggage, but was persuaded to go peacefully away.

But Mr. Chamberlain confessed to feeling the greatest apprehension until after the ceremony was over lest a second bride should appear at the altar.

Mr. Winston Churchill, according to his publisher, insists on checking four revised proofs of his new book on the war. Other authors, however, have far outgone that record. Dickens was a perfect terror in regard to proofs, as also was Tennyson, whose revisions were never finished.

Carlyle would cover every vacant space in the margin or between the lines with minute additions and emendations—and this not on one proof, but a dozen "revises." Victor Hugo also generally required at least a dozen proofs before he let a work pass from his hands, the last half-dozen being called for merely to ensure that the punctuation marks were correctly placed.

When the rebuilding of the Bank of England begins interesting relics may be discovered. Last week, during some very small work of excavation, an interesting old brass disc was discovered, which on being cleaned, revealed a coin in very fair condition of preservation going back to the time of the Emperor Trajan.

The coin (a dupondius or 2-ts piece) was submitted to the highest authorities on coinage, who at once identified the head on it as that of the Emperor Trajan. The coin is not of gold, but of a kind of brass, which the Romans called orichalcum. For a coin which is estimated to be nearly two thousand years old the state of preservation is very remarkable.

St. Anne's, Limehouse, the famous parish church the tower of which is endangered by the inroads of beetles during the last 200 years, has close association with Dickens.

Capt. Cuttle lived somewhere in the neighbourhood, and St. Anne's is supposed to be the church where he was "punctual in his attendance, and which hoisted the Union Jack every Sunday morning; and where he was good enough—the lawful beadle being infirm—to keep an eye upon the boys, over whom he exercised great power in virtue of his mysterious hook."

The numerous friends of the Lord Chancellor will be glad to know that he is better and that, notwithstanding the severe operations he has undergone, may be able to resume the duties which he has so admirably performed.

Baby Peggy, a three and a half years old film star, has signed a £100,000 contract. She agrees, by proxy, to make pictures for an American picture company, and the money will be deposited in a bank for her until she grows up. Her parents are Mr. and Mrs. John Montgomery, of Los Angeles.

Peggy was chosen from a group of children visiting a Hollywood studio to take a baby part as an extra. Since then she has become known throughout America in subordinate parts, but henceforth she will appear in pictures specially written for her. She thus becomes the world's youngest screen "star."

Sergeant Ballantine received 10,000 guineas—at that time the highest fee on record—for going to India to defend Mulhar Rao, the predecessor of the Gaekwar of Baroda, whose death was erroneously reported this week, on a charge of attempting to poison Colonel Phayre.

The brief was originally offered to Henry Hawkins, Q.C., (afterwards Lord Brampton), with a fee twice as large and was declined. Besides his thumping fee, Ballantine had a reception such as few lawyers ever experienced.

"Roses were showered upon me as I entered Baroda," he relates, "complimentary address were presented, and I was entertained at a banquet where a hymn composed in my honour was recited."

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A man may be so truly good he makes folk melancholy; they say, "We'd like him if he would betray some fault or folly. If he would only beat his wife or come home stewed and beery! But there's no blemish on his life, and so he makes us weary. Our wives are always pointing out this shining gent and crying, 'Oh, emulate that moral scout, of righteousness undying!' He shames his blushing fellowmen, who go their way unheeding; if he would only swipe a hen, or be run in for speeding!" We should admire the spotless jay who shuns all mortal sinning; alas, it's not the human way, nor was since the beginning. And when a man of snowy fame for rectitude unspotted, pulls off by chance some sinful game, how sorely he is swatted; The gossips all unite to break this decent man and godly; "We always knew he was a fake," men mutter, smiling broadly. And so we shining lights must tread with ceaseless circumspection, and wear our halos overhead without the least deflection. For if we stumble as we wend half-bricks will bruise our noses, and we won't have a single friend to throw a bunch of roses.

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