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BAIRD & CO. WHOLESALE AGENTS
ST. JOHN'S

The Old Marquis
OR,
The Girl of the Cloisters

CHAPTER XXIV.
 THE SELFISH PASSION.

Nagle started as if he had been

absorbed in some deep mental calculation.

"What do I say?" he said, hoarsely.

"What should such a man as I am say to such a proposal? I am without a penny; you have seen my dinner. Unless I take that ten-pound note I do not know where I shall find money to purchase another meal. What do I say? What can I say but 'Yes'?"

"Right," said Clifford Revel, rising and looking at his watch, and if you had been a sensible man you would have said it half an hour ago! Yes! There is the note. Put it out of sight of that grimy slavey or you'll lose it."

Nagle took it up and crushed it in the palm of his hand, and Clifford Revel nodded, with a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes.

"Good-by, my dear fellow. Don't spend that ten pounds for brandy, and be ready when I send for you. I'll leave the 'properties' to you. Play your part well, and there are two hundred and fifty pounds and a fresh life for you. Good-by!" and he held out his hand.

Nagle did not take it; he had moved toward the door and opened it, and Clifford Revel passed out.

Nagle stood for a moment looking at vacancy; then, with a gesture of supreme loathing, he took the note, and, lighting a candle, held it to the flame; but suddenly a thought seemed to strike him, and he crushed out the part that had taken fire and thrust the note in his pocket.

CHAPTER XXV.
 THE MAGIC OF TWO SYLLABLES.

LORD EDGAR took the train to Sunbury in a frame of mind not to be described. He had waited as he had promised for Clifford Revel, and had received a letter which startled and excited him. He walked from Sunbury to Larkworthy in a state of excitement, and reached the old churchyard gate half an hour before his time. The night was dark, but the moon came through the clouds at intervals and lighted up the quaint, old place in an effective fashion, enabling him to see a slim figure hastening toward him from the little lane and he held Lela in his arms.

"Have you been waiting long?" she asked. "I am so sorry! Grandpapa would not let me leave him for some time."

"It doesn't matter, darling. I would willingly wait an hour to have you with me for five minutes."

She looked up at him with a fond smile. She seemed to have gained color since last night; seemed to be something more like her old self. Happiness is a wonderful elixir! It laughs doctors to scorn; it is the most potent medicine under the sun, and if one could only put it into bottles and sell it at one shilling and three halfpence, what a fortune one would make!

"And did you ride?" she asked, in a low, soft voice that Lord Edgar thought the sweetest music under heaven.

"No," he said, "I came by train; the chestnut was not quick enough for me—why, the train seemed to crawl! But Lela, my darling, now I have come I have something very important to say to you."

She shrank and trembled instinctively, for, though his eyes were eager and bright with happiness, his voice was grave.

"What is it, Edgar? Not bad news? If so, don't tell me. I am so happy that I can not bear to hear of anything that—that might part us! And she clung to him. "And that is the only bad news that can come to me."

What could he do but unfold her in his strong arms and kiss her?

"It is not bad news, and it will not part us; in fact—now prepare to be startled, darling!"

"I am prepared," she said, with a touch of her old naivete.

"Well, then, listen!" he said. "You know this state of things can't continue."

This state of things—namely, nestling against his heart—seemed so sweet that she did not feel convinced.

"No?"

"No," he said, decidedly, "we can not go on like this. I mean that we can not go on like this forever."

"Forever is a long time," she murmured.

"For any time, then," he said. "I couldn't live without seeing you, say once a day; and to do that you must meet me in this—this clandestine kind of fashion, which I don't like."

"If grandpapa knew I should never

be able to meet you again," she whispered.

"Without—" The idea seemed so wild and outrageous that words failed her.

He could feel her heart beating wildly against his heart, her hand working nervously, her whole slender frame agitated by the thought.

"Exactly," he assented, as if she had given him a fresh advantage in argument; "exactly, and so we must bring it to an end."

She clung to him with her arms, but threw her head back and looked at him with alarm in her beautiful eyes.

"Are you—do you mean that—that we must not see each other?" she said, almost inaudibly.

"Heaven forbid! I mean that we must see each other every hour in the day, that we must be always together!" he said, fervently.

"I don't understand," she murmured.

"Let me tell you. You must know when I left you that I went to my cousin Clifford and told him that I had found you."

"Yes."

"Well, I need not tell you that he was delighted! Clifford is always delighted at any good fortune that befalls me. Besides, he had tried to help me in finding you, you know!"

"Yes," she said again, her eyes fixed on his.

"And when I told him, he saw that this state of things could not go on. Why, think of it! I might not be able to see you; Mr. Temple might find out that you meet me here! Oh, there are a hundred things to prevent our meeting!"

"Ah, yes!" she sighed.

"And so Clifford Revel suggested, advised that—"

"Why do you hesitate?" she murmured.

"Because I don't want to frighten you; because it seems so sudden and precipitate. Well, my darling, he agrees with me that we ought to be married!"

She started and threw her head back, and her face paled in the moonlight.

"Be—married! Yes, so we shall some day," she whispered, faintly.

"Some day, yes; but I mean now, at once!" he said, as quietly and with as matter-of-fact a voice as he could manage, seeing that his heart was beating nineteen to the dozen.

She trembled in silence for a moment.

"Now!" she breathed; "now! But grandpapa would never consent—never!"

"Yes, Lela! Come, darling, I don't want to frighten you: I meant to break it gently, but I am such a rough idiot, without the least tact! But think, Lela—why should we not be married?"

She thought. There seemed a hundred reasons, and yet not one, excepting that concerning her grandfather, which she could put into words.

"Why not?" he persisted. "If we waited for Mr. Temple's consent, after the way in which my father insulted him, we might wait for years, and—with a deep breath—"I could not do that!"

"Your father, the marquis?" she said, with a sudden shiver. "What would he say?"

Lord Edgar's face darkened.

"Don't let us think of that," he said.

"Ah, dear, dear Edgar, but I must think, if you don't. I know what he thinks, and he will tell me; and so plainly!"

"Not a word of that!" he said, in his impetuous way. "Forget all that, Lela. Between my father and myself yawns a wide gulf. He has done his best to ruin my happiness; he has wronged me past words. It is he who would have separated us, and who nearly succeeded in doing so."

"Ah, Edgar! But he is still your father!" said Lela.

"He is the Marquis of Parintosh," he said, coldly, and until now she did not know how coldly he could speak. "He has fought against me with edged tools; he can not complain if I use them in my turn and against him!"

She listened, trembling and uncertain.

"Not!" he continued. "By stratagem he sought to part us—we who love each other so dearly, and it is only just that by stratagem he should be met."

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