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THE HEIR OF Lancewood

CHAPTER XLIV.

He was not jealous. Of all the many thoughts that crossed his brain none of them were jealous thoughts. He knew that he, and he alone, had her whole and entire love—that he, and he alone, was loved by her. It was not jealousy that filled his mind, but a torturing, restless desire to know what his wife was withholding from him. He never for one moment dreamed that the secret concerned herself. The only thing he could imagine was that Gerald Dorman had confided something to her, and that that something was preying upon her mind.

He considered her rather as a victim to it than one concerned in it, and he felt something like anger toward the poor dead man. What right had he to trouble his wife's peace of mind with his affairs? He knew that Vivien had nice ideas of honor. If Gerald Dorman had entrusted anything to her, she would suffer anything rather than betray him.

"It is not right," said Lord St. Just to himself; "my wife ought not to go about in that kind of fashion. I must persuade her to tell me what it is all about, but I fear she will not. If she had thought it right to tell me, she would have done so long ago. I must find matters out for myself—then I can help her."

Hence it was no idea of jealousy, no thought of wrong, no suspicion of the truth, that led Lord St. Just to seek for the discovery of the mystery; he did it out of pure kindness for his wife. Knowing how careful she was to keep her word, he imagined her difficulty to be that she had given her promise and did not like to break it.

"I have no doubt," said Lord St. Just to himself, "that she will be greatly relieved if I can help her—and I will do it."

How? That was the next question. It seemed to him that the method was easy enough. He had told her that he knew Dr. Lester—what more easy than for him to make some excuse for calling at Grove House? And, if he happened to call at the same time that his wife was there, it would simply be a coincidence. Then he should know what was troubling her, and take all the trouble from her.

There was not a more honorable man living than Lord St. Just. It was his entire and perfect faith in his wife that gave him this idea about her. If he had had the faintest no-

tion that the secret she held was her own personal, private affair, he would no more have attempted to discover it than he would have pried into a letter or listened at a door. He did this for her sake, that he might take from her that which seemed like a burden and a trouble.

CHAPTER XLVI.

With Lord St. Just to resolve was to act. He had brought himself to believe that it was right for him to find out the mystery which so evidently oppressed his wife, and he would let nothing interfere with his project. He pictured to himself her joy and surprise when she found that he knew all, and that he would take all further trouble from her.

His plan was very simple; he had but to find out when his wife was going to Hammersmith, and then drive down quietly after her, and find her there. He arranged it all in his own mind. The opportunity soon came. Lady St. Just declined riding with him one morning, and he said to himself that she was going to the school. He had watched her intently that morning, and was more sure than ever that something was weighing her down and destroying her happiness.

One of the nurses came to say that Master Francis had a sore throat. There was nothing that Lord St. Just enjoyed so much as a visit to the nursery. He liked to go there with his wife and watch the children at their play.

"I have an hour to spare," he said, "will you come to the little ones, Vivien?"

As pleased as himself to be with them, she rose hastily, and they went away together.

"I almost wish at times," said Lord St. Just, "that we were not quite poor people, but that we held a less responsible position, so that we could spend more time with the children. I could almost give up King's Rest for that."

"But I would not give up Lancewood," she rejoined quickly. Her husband laughed.

"If it were not profane, I should say that you would sooner almost give up Heaven," he said; and she shrank from the words as though they had been a blow, saying to herself: "Alas, alas! I have perhaps forfeited heaven for Lancewood!"

Her husband noticed how she shrank—the distressed, pained look that came over her face. He wondered much and silently. Frank's throat was examined, but Lord St. Just said, laughingly, that it was merely an excuse for getting some nice lozenges. The boy soon forgot his fancied ailment in a romp.

"When I am a big man, papa," he said, "people must not call me Frank. My name is Francis."

"Yes," returned his father, gravely; "and you must be a good man and a great man, for you will be Francis Lord St. Just."

"And what shall I be?" asked the younger one, in his lisping voice. He saw the passion of love with which his wife seized the child and clasped him in her arms.

"You, my treasure, my love, my darling," she cried—"you shall be Arthur Nesle of Lancewood—of Lancewood!" she repeated, with a wail in her voice that seemed to come from an aching heart.

"I love Lancewood," lisped the boy. She rained passionate kisses on his face and hair, on his lips and eyes.

"No matter what happens," she said, "my boy shall have Lancewood." Then she stopped in sudden confusion, for

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she saw her husband's eyes fixed wonderingly on her. "What can happen?" he asked. "I am only talking nonsense to the child," she replied, turning away abruptly. "There is something wrong," thought Lord St. Just; and very slowly the idea occurred to him that this "something" was connected with Lancewood. The very word now seemed to move his wife with strange, sudden passion. He noticed that she kept the boy closely folded in her arms, as though she would shield him from all the world.

"My darling Vivien," he said, "you speak as though it lay in the power of any one to take Lancewood from the boy—but it does not." "Heaven be thanked!" she cried, with the same fire in her eyes and face.

Slowly but surely he became convinced of it. There was something wrong concerning Lancewood, and his wife was keeping it from him. He could not tell why he was so sure—the conviction of it came to him like an inspiration. He could not even dream what it could be; but the more he watched his wife the more certain he became of his conclusion.

Something wrong about Lancewood. What could it be? Did Mr. Dorman know it? Had it anything to do with Vivien's visits to the school? He was bewildered by his own thoughts. Every possible contingency occurred to him except the right one, and of that he never even faintly dreamed.

He had thought but little of the child Oswald—he had heard but little of either his life or death. He lost himself in conjecture, until the secret preyed upon him as much as it did upon his wife.

He must solve the mystery. On this morning he asked his wife if she were going out riding with him. When she declined, he concluded that she was about to pay one of her mysterious visits.

"I too will give up my ride this morning," he said. "There are several calls that I have to make. We will go to-morrow instead."

Lady St. Just made some reply and hastened away. He hated himself for the meanness of watching her—but what else was he to do? How in any other way was he to discover her trouble? He saw her leave the house, plainly attired—so plainly indeed that it seemed to him her dress was a disguise.

"My poor wife," said Adrian St. Just to himself—"all this is so unlike her." He went at once and ordered the carriage, telling the coachman to drive to Hammersmith.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Arrived at Dr. Lester's school at Hammersmith, Lord St. Just found that after all he had been right in his conclusions; a cab stood before the door, and he felt quite sure his wife had driven down in it. He asked if the doctor was at home, and the servant told him that he was expected every minute.

"I will wait for him," said Lord St. Just.

"The ante-room is engaged," said the footman. "Will you walk this way, my lord?" Then Lord St. Just was guilty of his first deceit.

"I know," he said, hastily—"a lady is there with one of the students."

"Yes," was the reply—"Mrs. Smith and Master Dorman. Do you wish to see them, my lord?" "She goes by a false name," thought the peer, quickly. "My wife, my proud Vivien, to assume a false name! What can it mean?"

He heard the sound of a voice, rich clear and sweet, vibrating with emotion, full of pathos. He recognized it as Vivien's.

"It is all right," he said to the footman; "you need not announce me—I will go in. I—I expected to meet this lady here."

Only too pleased to go back to his newspaper, the footman returned to his chair, while Lord St. Just opened the door and entered the room. His eyes fell first upon his wife's face; and, proud, beautiful, noble though it was, he read guilt there—guilt that looked at him out of the beautiful eyes—guilt that covered and shrank and shuddered before him. Their eyes met. She rose from her seat, tall, stately, defiant; her face blanched, her lips grew pale and sprang apart; a fierce light, such as he had never seen before, came into her eyes. She drew back, as though she had some thought of escape, and then, with a low cry, faced her husband.

"Adrian," she said, "what brings you here?" He had intended to speak lightly, but his agitation alarmed him. What did it mean, that defiant yet shrinking attitude—the guilt of that noble face? She looked as though something long dreaded had happened at last. That was what he saw first; then his eyes fell on a handsome, fair-haired strippling standing close by his wife's side—a boy, great Heaven, with his wife's face, so exactly like her that they might have been mother and son, with the same beautiful mouth and molded chin.

(To be Continued.)

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