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### The Old Marquis; OR, The Girl of the Cloisters

CHAPTER XI  
A CHARITABLE DEED.

CLIFFORD REVEL took out his watch as he and Lord Edgar went down Mrs. Drayton's staircase.

"Shall we go to the club?" he said.

Lord Edgar hesitated. He was not much in the mood for the smoking-room of the club. He was full of the romance of the day, of the novel experience of the evening. He wanted to be quiet, and felt a conviction that the talk and chatter of a score or so of men, in clouds of tobacco smoke, would not chime in with his feelings.

Clifford Revel watched him closely. "No? Suppose you come home with me, and we have a cup of coffee and a cigar?"

"That would suit me better," said Lord Edgar.

They got into a hansom and were driven to the Temple, in which Clifford Revel had chambers. They were not so luxuriously furnished as Lord Edgar's, but they were extremely comfortable, and, like everything else about their owner, in most accurate taste. There was no valet to wait upon them, but a maid-servant attached to the house brought them coffee, and Clifford drew a chair to the window for his cousin and put the box of cigars at his elbow. While he did this he hummed an air from the burlesque of the day, and seemed to be in his usual free and careless mood, but in reality his acute brain was hard at work.

The thin, clean-cut lips closed tightly, and a streak of light flashed for a moment in Clifford Revel's eyes.

"So!" he thought, "that is her game!" But he said, in the pleasant manner possible: "Of course not, my dear fellow! I envy you, as a score of other lost ones will do when they hear of it."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Lord Edgar, with the blunt shyness of a modest man, unconscious of his great attractions and alive only to his defects. "It is nothing out of the usual—I mean she could have asked any one."

"Just so," assented Clifford Revel; "but you were fortunate enough to be on the spot, and she knows you are an authority on horseflesh, which I am not. But take care, my dear boy; take care!" And he smiled, as he lazily knocked the ash from his cigar.

"What do you mean? Oh, I suppose—what nonsense! Chaff away!"

"This isn't chaff; it is corn, or, rather, you may find it to be another kind of fruit—Dead-Sea fruit, that crumbles into ashes when you think you are going to enjoy it. But I don't know, I don't know. She may think it too good a thing to be lost, and, instead of charming you into loving her, and then looking extremely surprised and almost offended when you tell her so, she may graciously accept your love, and—the future Marquise of Farintosh."

Lord Edgar flushed. "You have drawn a downright first, a thoroughly heartless woman!" he said, almost indignantly.

Clifford Revel shrugged his shoulders. "And that is exactly what everyone thinks of her," he said; "but, no doubt, they do her an injustice. All the same, he who is forewarned is forearmed. Beware, my gentle cousin, of the dark eyes and witching smile which have driven better men than you—or I—to—make fools of themselves!"

While he had been speaking in the lowest, slowest, most careless tone, Lord Edgar had arisen from his chair, and was pacing the room.

He took two or three turns in silence, his brows knitted, his hands thrust into his pockets. Clifford Revel watched and waited; he knew that the solution of the enigma was approaching; that in a few minutes he would know all that he wanted.

"Clifford," exclaimed Lord Edgar, abruptly, "these words of yours, this chaff, have decided me to confide in you."

"Yes? You couldn't have a more worthy confidant, my dear Edgar. Proceed. Pour out your sorrows; I am all attention!" he drawled, languidly.

"Sorrows!" echoed Lord Edgar, with a smile, and a thrill of sudden joy. "It is no sorrow, Clifford. You warned me—most unjustly—against this Miss Drayton; it is quite unnecessary. I am not likely to fall in love with her, because—I have already done so with—some one else."

Clifford Revel did not turn his head. He had suspected it. He had looked forward to this hour for years, with a malignant fury and despair. While this cousin of his remained single, there was some slight chance of his—Clifford Revel—becoming my Lord of Farintosh; but married, with an

Admirable actor as he was, it cost him an effort to crush out any traces

of bitterness in his voice, as he answered: "My dear fellow, I congratulate you!"

"Do, do!" returned Lord Edgar, pausing behind him, and laying his hand on Clifford Revel's shoulder. "I knew you would be glad, Clifford! It is just like you—just like your generous nature! Yes, I am the happiest man in all London to-night, I don't care who the next may be!"

My dear fellow, we are such excellent friends, notwithstanding the traditional family feud, that, of course, I am glad you have found something to make you happy—I suppose I ought to say somebody. May one ask whom the lady of your choice may be?" he said. "Or is it a secret for the present?"

"No, it is no secret," answered Lord Edgar, pacing up and down because—because he had the gout when I went to say good-by, and he—he—well, he didn't like to be disturbed."

Clifford Revel grinned sardonically. "I have heard that my lord the marquis is not the most amiable of men when the gout is about. So he has got to learn that the Lady Arabella, or the Lady Sophonisba, or—"

"Don't chaff, Clifford!" interrupted Lord Edgar, gently. "No, he does not know at present, and the lady is a lady by nature and breeding, not by title." He said this quite naturally, as if it didn't matter in the slightest.

"Indeed?" said Clifford Revel, in a tone of friendly interest.

"No. To tell you all, Clifford, she is the granddaughter of Professor Temple, the librarian—down at the Abbey, you know!"

Clifford Revel looked around at him in speechless surprise, genuine and too great to be masked.

"The granddaughter of—?" he exclaimed.

Lord Edgar nodded over a newly lighted cigar.

"Yes; I won't bore you with telling you how I met her—I won't go into the usual raptures about her beauty and her goodness. But she is the most lovely girl—there, I shall have to put the brake on at once, or I shall run on for an hour! I found her, discovered her blooming like a flower in some deserted, hidden-away garden. As pure and innocent as a flower, indeed. Clifford, I don't know whether you know what I mean—I mean, whether you—I beg your pardon, old fellow, if I seem rude and intrusive—but whether you have ever been in love?"

A vision of Edith Drayton arose between the summer sky and the smoke that floated from Clifford Revel's cigar, and his dark face flushed.

"Let us take it that I can sympathise with you," he said, quietly.

"Then you can understand how I feel. It was only this morning that I told her how dearly, how passionately I loved her, and then there came that telegram about that beastly horse, and I was obliged to leave her. I was to have seen her again to-night, and—but there; I shall go off to-morrow—no, confound it,—I had forgotten my appointment with Miss Drayton!"

Clifford Revel scarcely heard him. He was in tortures. What plan could he hit upon that would separate these two, that would prevent this headstrong, impetuous "fool"—for so he thought him—from marrying? As the word crossed his brain, he started. Perhaps, after all, Lord Edgar was not such a fool as he seemed, and did not mean to marry her!

He laughed.

(to be continued.)

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