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Always have Bovril in the House

## The Heir of Bayneham

—AND—  
Lady Hutton's Ward.

CHAPTER XV.

"I have quite come to the conclusion, Barbara," she said one day to her niece, "that Hilda was a relative of Lady Hutton's—perhaps the daughter of some poor cousin. One can tell she belongs to a good family. I never saw any one more thoroughly ladylike or better bred."

Miss Earle agreed with her aunt; she was pleased, too, at seeing how thoroughly Bertie admired his friend's wife.

long, beautiful dream. She was but a fair, loving, gentle child. She had been nursed in love; she only knew care and sorrow by name. The one single grief of her life was softened by the healing hand of Time. The flowers that bloomed brightly beneath the summer sun were not more fair; the birds that sung were not happier than she was. She liked to be alone at times, and think it to dream over again every event of her short, happy life.

One morning, the first time for many days, she found herself free, and without any duty that required attention. Most of her guests had driven over to Laleham Priory, and she had not been able to join them. Lady Graham, who also declined to ride, was in close conversation with her maid, and Sir Harry Higham had remained at home to write letters.

Out in the garden the sun was shining brightly, the flowers were at the height of their beauty. The large branches of the tall trees waved as though inviting Hilda to enjoy the shade beneath them. It was all pleasant and fair. She hastily threw a lace shawl over her pretty morning dress, and placed a coquettish little hat on her bright golden hair, and went through the garden. The gate that led to the park was open, so she passed through it, and down the broad, shady path that led to the lodge.

The lodge was a pretty cottage, picturesque enough in its rich dress of green creepers with their purple flowers. Lady Hilda stopped to speak to one of the children playing near the gate; then without any definite purpose, looked down the high-road that led to the town of Dulston.

Suddenly her startled glance fell upon a figure of a woman who was seated upon the moss-covered stone near the gate—a woman poorly dressed, but with something strange in her attitude. She had been looking eagerly down the broad path, when the first glimmer of the white dress shone through the trees. She asked one of the children, "Who is that lady over there with the white dress and golden hair?"

"That," said the child, "is—the young Lady Bayneham, my lord's wife."

Then, not being particularly clean or presentable, the boy ran off, where her ladyship could not see him.

The woman seated herself upon the flat, moss-covered stone; a strange look, as of deep quiet, came over her face; her eyes seemed to drink in every movement of that tall, slender, white-robed figure. But Lady Hilda never saw her until she looked out of the park gate into the highroad. Then she noted with wonder the careworn, beautiful face, the tired look of

the large, violet eyes, and the drooping dependency of the whole figure. As she drew near the woman rose, when something in her face caused Lady Bayneham to stop and look kindly at her.

"My lady," said the woman, her eyes still fixed on the lovely young face, "pray forgive me. I have been away from England many years. It is so long since I saw an English flower. Will you give me one of those roses that grow there?"

With the sweetness that never failed her, Hilda gathered a beautiful rose, and held it out to the woman.

"You look tired," she said, in her kind musical voice. "Have you travelled far?"

"Yes, many miles," she replied, taking the flower from the thin, white hand.

"Can I offer you anything else?" Lady Bayneham gently, half drawing out her purse as she spoke.

"No, my lady," cried the strange

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woman. "I had a longing to hold an English flower in my hands again, and I thank you very much."

As though she could not trust herself to speak another word, she turned away, and was soon hidden by the branching trees. Lady Bayneham looked after her in some surprise.

"What a beautiful, sorrowful face!" she said to herself; "there is a whole story written in it."

CHAPTER XVI.

"We must do something in return for all these invitations, Hilda," said Lord Bayneham. "It is more than three months now since we returned, and although we have had what one may call parties every day, it is time we did more. What do you propose?"

"A ball," she replied, her fair young face glowing with delight at the thought. "And, Claude, ask Barbara to come down for it. I am sure she will be pleased."

"We shall soon have Christmas here, and my mother promised to spend it at Bayneham," said Claude. "Suppose we wait until then, and give a ball that all the country will remember. Bertie promised us a week. What do you say?"

"It will be best," she replied, more sedately; for though longing to see Barbara, and enjoy a ball, Hilda looked forward with more awe than delight to the visit of her stately mother-in-law.

Hilda had almost forgotten the little incident that happened in the summer. Once or twice she thought, with wonder and admiration, of that beautiful, sad face, so worn and pale, and then in her heart felt thankful that those mysterious trials and troubles which wreck other lives had not shadowed hers.

There was but one thing wanting to make her perfectly happy—that was the love of Lady Bayneham. If Claude's mother would give her but one half the warm affection she lavished upon her son or Barbara Earle, Hilda would be quite content. Time passed so happily, that the days seemed one bright, long dream. Christmas was drawing near, and great were the preparations for the coming festivities. The Oulton Gazette informed the public that Christmas would bring a party of illustrious guests to the castle, and went on in a state of wild rapture to describe the gayeties expected. Among those most celebrated, Albert Carleton, esq., whose recent work on the political state of England had created a furore, was named as "one of our leading writers."

King Winter did not appear in his usual garb; there was no snow or frost when Christmas came; but contrary to all natural laws, the weather was even warm and mild. There was an attempt at rain, a feeble gleam of sunshine, but none of what English people call "seasonable cold."

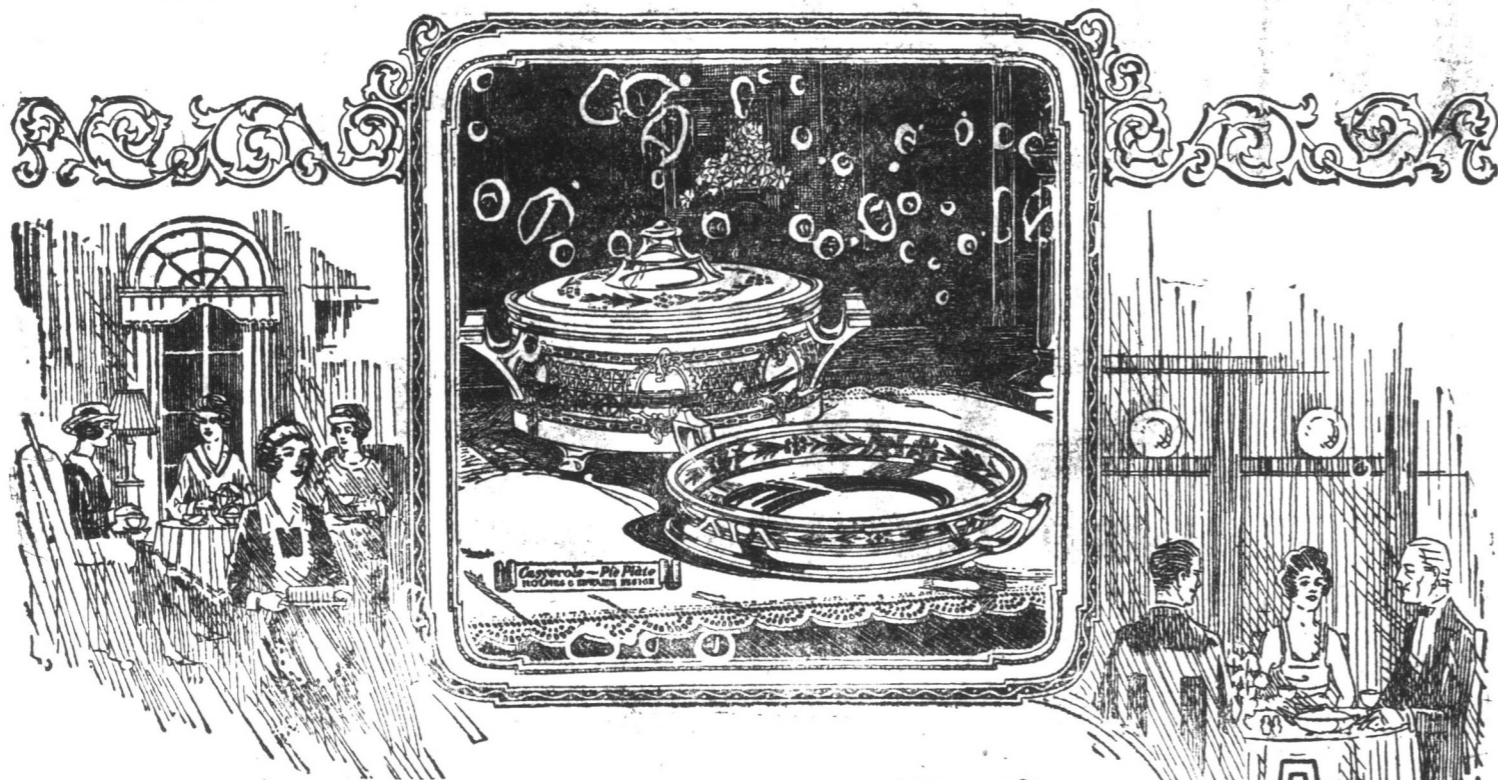
Notwithstanding the absence of snow and frost there was no lack of holly and mistletoe in the castle. It was many long years since Christmas had been kept in such royal state at Bayneham, nor was there any lack of gaiety among the guests assembled there.

It would have been difficult to decide who was most popular—the graceful, lovely hostess, whose smiles had a magical charm, whose elegant, winning manner made every one feel at home and at ease, or Barbara Earle, with her stately figure and noble, soul-like face, her eloquent words and grand thoughts. There could be little out-door amusements, except shooting and hunting for the gentlemen, but no one could be dull or want amusement where Hilda and Barbara presided. Bertie was a host in himself, and the evenings at Bayneham Castle were found too short instead of too long.

One night was given to charades—Bertie being stage manager, and thoroughly well did he accomplish his task. He had what he called "magnificent materials," and he knew how to use them.

"I have a grand idea," said Bertie one morning to Lord Bayneham; "they spoke of having some tableaux vivants to-night. I consider that we have among us the three most perfect types of beauty. We could manage a beautiful picture—'The Gift of the Golden Apple.' You may be Paris, Miss Earle would make a magnificent Minerva, Miss Dovernay is a perfect Juno, and Lady Hilda would represent the golden-haired Aphrodite as few others could. What do you think, Claude?"

(To be continued.)



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