

HER HUMBLE LOVER

Lady Bumbleby complains that she is scarcely getting any dinner, but still implores him to tell her another story "like the last," and Lady Rookwell nods and grins with pleased satisfaction. She likes her dinners to be a success, and she feels, with all the acuteness of a woman of the world, that Hector Warren is helping pretty considerably toward the success of the present one.

Still Sir Frederic makes an effort. He tries to shut out the voice, to forget the presence of the man he hates, and struggles to talk to Signa about the Park, his mother, anything that he can think of, but it is of no use; for though Signa makes proper responses, he knows that her eyes are wandering ever and again to the handsome face opposite her, and that she is listening to him with but half her ears. Then, with a fierce, passionate jealousy in his breast, he releases into silence.

Presently a name is mentioned that attracts his attention. It is Lady Rookwell who speaks.

"And how are you getting on at the Moated Grange, Mr. Warren?" she asks. "Have you quite tired of your friend Lord Delamere's permission to cover yourself with dust, and get bored to death in his deserted book-room?"

Hector Warren finishes what he is saying to Lady Bumbleby, then turns calmly.

"Not at all tired yet, Lady Rookwell," he says, with a smile. "Perhaps I am rather partial to dust."

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Please Mention This Paper.

"Hem," says her ladyship, with a grin. "You don't look much of a book-worm."

"Am I to infer that I am a bigger fool in your ladyship's estimation than I look, or that I appear more of an idiot than I really am," he asks demurely.

Lady Rookwell joins in the general laugh that rises at her expense.

"I don't know," she says. "I shall make up my mind some day. At any rate you are not such a fool as your friend Lord Delamere!"

Hector Warren inclines his head with a slight gravity.

"I don't know whether to feel grateful or indignant," he says. "But at least I am thankful that Delamere is not here to hear you."

"I shouldn't care if he were!" retorts her awful ladyship. "You can tell him what I say if you like!"

He shakes his head gravely, but with a suspicion of a smile about his lips.

"Do you mean that you are afraid?" says her ladyship. "Well, I suppose that you are. It seems that his lordship is ready enough with his duelling pistols."

There is an awkward silence for a moment, for the story of the man whom Lord Delamere robbed and then killed has spread pretty widely by this time, and the rector hastens to fill in the pause by remarking in the saddest of voices that really there seems to be a chance for an exceptionally good harvest. But Lady Rookwell cares nothing for awkward silences.

"By the way," she says, "do you know—have you ever heard of—don't pass that junket, my dear!—this to Lady Bumbleby? My woman is good at junkets; it's the only sweet thing she understands, poor wretch—have you ever heard of Laura Derwent, Mr. Warren?"

Hector Warren looks up at the ceiling, as if making an effort of memory.

There is somewhat of a silence as the praised junket goes round, and Signa finds herself looking and waiting intently for his answer.

Lady Bumbleby and one or two others listen and wait, also, expecting some piece of audacity from her ladyship.

"Derwent—Derwent," he murmurs.

"Oh, if you don't recollect her on the instant you assuredly haven't seen her," says Lady Rookwell, abruptly. "No one ever saw her, especially a man, and managed to forget her. Laura Derwent is one of the most striking women I know. Why, where have you been not to have heard of or seen her? Laura was the reigning professional beauty for at least three seasons!" and she grins.

Hector Warren looks humbly remorseful.

"Deal gently with me, Lady Rookwell," he says. "I am a wanderer in wild places, and that only."

"You must be not to have heard of Laura," says Lady Rookwell, shortly. "Fancy, Sir Frederic, Mr. Warren never heard of Laura Derwent!"

Sir Frederic looks up and tries to smile, but the smile turns to a scowl as his eyes meet the calm ones of his opposite neighbor.

"Sir Frederic will tell you all about her," says Lady Rookwell, maliciously. "She was down here staying with me two years ago. She's a sort of niece of mine; a cousin, I think, though she calls me aunt. Younger cousins generally prefer to call their older ones aunt. You remember her, Sir Frederic?"

"Oh, yes," he murmurs, awkwardly, "of course I do."

"Of course you do," retorts Lady Rookwell, coolly. "You used to flirt with her shamelessly. I think she turned all your heads—even the rector's there," and she grins across the table.

The rector smiles blandly, and coughs.

"Most charming—ahem—young lady. Yes, yes," he murmurs.

"You would have admired her immensely, my dear," says her ladyship, nodding her head at Signa till her feathers and lace quiver and shake in the candle-light.

Signa smiles.

"Dark women always admire fair ones, and vice versa," she goes on. "or they say they do—with a grin—which is the same thing."

Signa laughs softly.

"And is that all?" demands the rector Warren, with an admirable affectation of intense disappointment. "Lady Rookwell, you are bound to tell us something thrilling about Miss Clara Derwent, or we shall never survive our blighted curiosity."

"Laura—not Clara," says Lady Rookwell, sharply. "You seem to have a remarkably bad memory for so young a man—study and late hours, I shows all her teeth."

Hector Warren joins in the laugh supposed to be a malicious grin that which this chilling rebuke produces.

"Exactly," he says. "But don't punish the rest for my misfortune—"

"Or your fault," she cuts in. "Well, you don't deserve it, but I will tell you what I intended. Well, I have had a letter from Laura—not Clara—a singular sort of letter. I ought to have

said that when she was here two years ago, she was immensely taken with the Grange."

"It is a fine old place," says Hector Warren, calmly, as he chooses an olive with careful discrimination.

"Yes," nods her ladyship, "immensely. Nothing would do but she must go over it. Of course she didn't. She would have gone sharp enough, but I wouldn't allow it. I don't care for any one belonging to me trespassing on Lord Delamere's place."

"Of course not," murmurs Hector Warren, assentively.

"She was very much put out, but as she was my niece, and as I have as strong a will as any Laura Derwent, I forbade it—Are you all waiting to leave them to their wine, my dears?" she breaks off, looking at the ladies.

would get Lord Delamere's permission to visit his deserted Grange, and see it in spite of me."

There is a profound silence, and all eyes are fixed on Lady Rookwell.

"Yes," she says, nodding. "That is the sort of young lady that the period has turned loose upon us. If I had made such a speech to my aunt—"

There is a general smile, which grows into a burst of laughter at the idea of Lady Rookwell having at any time of her life possessed any scruples respecting her mode of speech.

"But times are changed," she says, not at all affected by their incredulity. "A young woman nowadays, I'm told, doesn't scruple to ask a man to marry her, if he is fit at all backward and she wants him very much."

"This is indeed good news!" murmurs Hector Warren, with a tone and air of devout thankfulness and satisfaction, and of course there is another laugh. "Is the custom confined to young ladies, Lady Rookwell?"

"Oh, dear, do be quiet, Mr. Warren!" implores Lady Bumbleby, wiping her eyes and shaking with laughter; but Lady Rookwell merely grins, as if she were reserving herself and intends to have revenge upon him.

"Yes; she said she meant to meet Lord Delamere and ask him straight out for permission to inspect the

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Grange; she was sure of meeting him somewhere."

"And was it good Chartrouse?" asks Hector Warren, with an air of intense interest.

Lady Rookwell grins on him.

"Oh, you think she failed, do you? Well, then, you are wrong. I shall not see my cordial, and I shall lose my old pearl suit, for I was foolish enough to stake it against her success. Here's the letter I had from her. It came yesterday," and she fumbles at her dress, then looks up sharply at one of the footmen: "Tell Grimes—that is the lady's maid—to give you a letter out of the pocket of my morning dress."

The man goes, and to fill up the few minutes of waiting, the rector endeavors to start up a conversation; but too much curiosity has been aroused, and all eyes watch the delivery of the letter by the footman to his mistress.

"Hem!" says Lady Rookwell, putting up her gold eye-glasses and scanning the letter. "Lady Foxwell has run away with Jack de Vere—No, that's not it," she breaks off, coolly. "Oh, here it is! I am glad to say, my dear aunt, that you have lost your bet. You can send the pearl suit in my next box from London. Perhaps it may want resetting. If it should, Blobs, of Regent street, is the best man—Yes, there's no fool like an old fool. I'll send them to Blobs—he will do them properly. I have met the mysterious Lord Delamere at last. It was at a small wayside inn in Tuscany, where we had put up for the night in consequence of an awful storm. He came in drenched to the skin. It seemed that he had been stopping here—Cas—Cas—I can't make the name out. See whether you can, Mr. Warren," and she hands the note to Lady Bumbleby to give to him.

Hector Warren takes the letter, and Signa, watching him, notices that he does so with rather a bored expression, as if the story had ceased to interest him; indeed, had grown rather wearisome.

"I've dented the place with my finger-nail," says Lady Rookwell.

"Oh, thanks! Yes, here it is," he says. "Casalina," and he hands the letter back.

"Casalina. Thanks," says Lady Rookwell. "Casalina is the name of the place, and he is stopping here to see out some adventure—ahem—er—"

"She breaks off, and there is an awkward silence."

"On Lord Delamere's part, do you mean?" asks Hector Warren, with a well-feigned innocence.

"No, sir, on the young lady's," retorts Lady Rookwell, sharply, as she rises.

Hector Warren gets up to open the door for them before he replies, then he says carelessly, almost indifferently:

"I think she deserves to succeed. And I only hope she doesn't intend to make a bonfire of the old place unless she also intends to rebuild it," and he meets Lady Rookwell's keen glance as she passes him with a easy smile.

CHAPTER XIII.
"My dear, I suppose if I asked you to play whist you would feel quite insulted?" says Lady Rookwell, as the footmen noisily open the card-tables, and wheel them into convenient positions, the old people casting wistful and expectant glances at the operation.

"I should only feel ashamed," said Signa, coolly nestled in a capacious chair. "For I should have to admit that I am about the worst player in the world."

"Then I certainly won't ask you!" exclaims her ladyship, emphatically. "Besides, we shall want you to warble



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awkward moment, during which the rector coughs and rubs his chin, and the ladies try to look as if they did not understand—all excepting Signa, whose eyes, fixed innocently on Hector Warren's face, do not swerve.

"Of course I didn't know his name, and only by accident discovered it from picking up an envelope which was directed to the Earl of Delamere. Rather foolish of Lord Delamere to leave his letters about," says Lady Rookwell, maliciously. "But to go on. He doesn't seem at all the sort of man one would imagine him. He is tall and—"

Hector Warren emits a little groan and smiles, but Lady Rookwell goes on:

"Handsome, and not at all huffy or disagreeable, as you led me to expect. Indeed, if one did not know the character he bears, one would really have thought him a quiet, respectable member of society. What a hypocrite the man must be," says her ladyship sharply. "He was very pleasant with us, so much so that, though I only made our wager in fun, and was rather afraid of him, I ventured during the course of the evening to tell him that I had seen his place in England from the outside, and wanted to see the interior; and what do you think he did? He actually took a sheet from his pocket-book and wrote a letter to his agent, authorizing him to place the Grange at my disposal for as long a time as I desired."

There is a murmur of astonishment as Lady Rookwell looks up from her letter.

"There! So you see, Mr. Warren, you are not the only person to whom Lord Delamere gives the use of his deserted Grange. I am sorry to lower you in your own estimation, but here it is in black and white."

All eyes are turned on Hector Warren, and Sir Frederic throws him a glance of contemptuous satisfaction at his anticipated discomfort. But nothing like embarrassment does this gentleman display. He laughs, even, though softly, and nods.

"If Delamere granted such a favor to me, it is impossible that he should be able to refuse it to such a charming lady as Miss Laura Derwent," he says.

"Ahem! and does Miss Derwent intend taking advantage of her extraordinary privilege?" asks the rector.

"Listen," replies her ladyship. "I told him that I should take him at his word, and that I was quite serious, and he said that I might do as I liked with the place, and I'm just considering what I really can do. Don't be surprised if I startle you with some wonderful use of Lord Delamere's little piece of paper! I should be very much surprised if she don't!" says Lady Rookwell, folding the letter

to us; for the same reason I sha'n't ask Mr. Warren, though no doubt he is a most splendid player."

"I meant once more," says Hector Warren, with a smile above his coffee cut. "I was trembling in my shoes, Lady Rookwell. If you'll let me off I will turn the music for Miss Grenville, or play an accompaniment on a comb, or do anything in fact. There is only one thing from which my soul shrinks in mortal fear and trembling, and that is the idea of whist with you, and the rector, and the doctor!"

Lady Rookwell grins.

"Very well," she says; then she looks round the room, and her eyes fall upon Sir Frederic seated moodily on a small chair—why do big men habitually choose the smallest and frailest chair in the room?—making a pretense of studying the photograph album, but watching Signa and Hector Warren out of the corner of his eyes. "You'll play, of course, Sir Frederic?"

"I'd rather not," he says, coloring, and wishing with envious rage that he could answer as readily and lightly as the man he hates, whose repartee comes so easily. "You can find plenty of other people," he adds, not over pleasantly.

Lady Rookwell grins. "But how will you amuse yourself?"

He smokes angrily.

"Oh, I am all right," he replies, with a sneer. "I can listen to Mr. Warren's singing, you know."

"Ah, so you can," says Lady Rookwell, rather coolly. "That's a nice compliment to Mr. Warren!" and with another pronounced grin she leads the way to the table, round which the old hands have gathered like warhorses scenting and anxious for the battle.

(To be continued.)

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PEACES OF THE PAST.

How Former Great Wars Have Been Closed.

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The period which lapsed between the beginning and ending of the overtures which put a full stop to the Russo-Japanese war in 1905 was almost three months. The parleys at Portsmouth lasted only three months when overtures for peace were made by Spain, and seventeen days later a protocol ended hostilities, but it took months to arrange the terms of peace at Paris which brought the Philippines and Porto Rico under our flag, after the payment of \$20,000,000 to Spain.

It took about four months for the peace proposals ending the Franco-Prussian war in 1871 to reach the point of final agreement and the signing of the treaty which provided for the enormous indemnity of a billion dollars, or 5,000,000,000 francs, which the people of France had to pay, besides the cession of Alsace-Lorraine.

The British Boer war was brought to a conclusion in 1902 by the complete defeat of the Boers, but a treaty of peace was finally negotiated at Pretoria while guerrilla warfare was kept up.

In the Balkan conflicts which preceded the present great war, terms of peace were agreed upon twice, but the conclusion of the first negotiations was speedily followed by preparations for the resumption of hostilities. The second effort to bring about peace was more effective and resulted in the Treaty of London.

In our last war with England which the Treaty of Ghent ended in 1814, its terms had been agreed upon and the document signed before the Battle of New Orleans was fought and the British conquered by General Jackson, as the news of the agreement to end the strife had not crossed the ocean in these days before the steamship, the telegraph, the wireless and aviation.—Brooklyn

Money talks, and even the most pure-minded of us don't object to listening to the conversation of filthy lucre.

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The Englishman.

During a lull in trench activities, a Frenchman and an Englishman fell into a dispute in which each stoutly maintained the supremacy of his own country. Finally to end the discussion amicably, the Frenchman politely remarked: "Eh bien, monsieur, if I were not a Frenchman, I would wish to be an Englishman."

"And," replied the Englishman, stoutly, "if I were not an Englishman, I would want to be one."—New York Evening Post.

A German Dug-out.

An officer in the Lancashire Regiment gave an amusing description of a scene in a trench abandoned by the Germans. The officers were described as looking as if they were dressed for parade, with their uniforms quite clean. The trench and dug-outs were fitted up like dressing rooms in a hotel. There was electric light, a great water pump, and abundance of clean clothes, socks, linen, boots, washing and shaving gear, cigars, cigarettes and food. It looked as if the German officers had expected to be there for many a long month.

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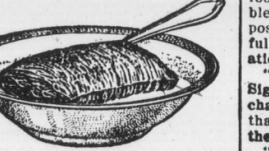
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