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The Earl's Son;

TWO HEARTS UNITED

CHAPTER X.

He was gazing before him as if lost in the effort to word his mental picture, and did not see the color that grew and grew in the "pale face of old ivory"; or the smile that played about the beautiful lips.

"Oh, that's a very common type," she said, contemptuously, but with a subtle sweetness in her voice.

Ralph started from his reverie and got up awkwardly.

"I hear the carriage," he said. "They can't drive up to the door, I'm afraid."

His face went red. But she shook her head as she raised herself.

"No, no; I can walk or hop; at any rate, if you will give me your arm—" for he was standing still with nervousness and no longer self-possessed, looking at her with a half-fearful embarrassment which, of course, restored her to her usual calm.

He held out his arm, and, putting her hand on it, she hopped to the door, where her maid, Goodwin, met her, exclaiming in agonized accents:

"Oh, Miss Veronica!" "Oh, it's all right," said Veronica. "Don't make a fuss—"

"Take care! You'll strike your foot—you can't hop into the carriage!" cried Ralph, warningly.

"I can't fly in!" she retorted, pettishly. "Help me, please!"

There was only one way of helping her; and, lifting her in his strong arms once more, he lifted her in. Veronica sank back slowly, looking at him through her long lashes.

"Thank you very much," she said, in a low voice.

Ralph drew back, feeling dazed and bewildered by the novel emotion and sensation which were throbbing within him.

"Drive slowly!" he said, hoarsely, but in a tone of command that would have been suitable to the earl himself. Instinctively the coachman's hand went up to his hat, and he only checked himself in time.

Ralph gazed after the carriage for a moment or two, then drawing his hand across his brow as if to wipe away the mist that hung about his brain, he went into the hut.

A small, dark object lay on the floor beside the couch. It was Veronica's handkerchief. He picked it up and opened it, gazing at it vacantly, then he raised it to his lips.

The touch of the cold, wet cambic brought him back to his senses.

"Oh, I'm mad!" he exclaimed, with a harsh laugh, and he flung the handkerchief away from him. But it seemed to reproach him mutely from where it lay, and presently, after he had paced up and down, glancing at it at each turn, he picked it up and thrust it impatiently in his breast pocket.

CHAPTER XI.

With the assistance of Goodwin, who was much more flurried and upset than her mistress, Veronica hobbled to her room. The doctor had already been sent for, and he arrived by the time she had exchanged her habit for one of the loose and costly robes which it pleases ladies to call a dressing-gown.

Lord Lynborough came up with him and, though he attempted to conceal it, exhibited a concern and anxiety which surprised and touched Veronica.

"Why were you without a groom?" he asked, severely. "Are you in much pain? Isn't the foot very much

swollen? Are you sure it's only a sprain?"

"I sent Brown back," said Veronica, almost humbly. "There are times when it annoys me to have him pounding after me; I enjoy my ride so much more when I am alone."

"I daresay. We most of us enjoy being alone and unhampered by attendants, but—"

He shrugged his shoulders as he looked down at her with his cynical smile.

"It is only a sprain; there is nothing broken, I am rejoiced to find," said the old-fashioned doctor in his courtly way. "It was very wise of you to have the boot removed."

"It was not I who thought of it, but Ralph Farringdon, the gamekeeper," said Veronica, reluctantly, as if she could not withhold from him his due. "It was he who caught the mare, and car—took me to the hut and sent for the carriage and—"

Lord Lynborough frowned.

"It seems to me that this young man is very much in evidence. But I suppose you rewarded him? If not, I will send for him—"

"Oh, no, no!" sprang from her lips hastily; "please don't do anything of the sort—I mean—the color came to her face—" I mean that he would not like it."

"Ah, yes; I remember he refused the sovereign I offered him the other day," remarked the earl. "A singular young man. Such pride is rather uncommon in men of his class. But

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I am glad he was so thoughtful, and I will send for him and thank him."

"I don't think you need do so," said Veronica, with a fine attempt at casualness. "I thanked him."

"Ah, well!" assented the earl. "But I trust this will be a lesson to you not to go unattended for the future."

"Oh, yes, the lesson is there all right enough," said Veronica, looking down at her foot on which the doctor was skillfully putting a cold compress. "I hope I sha'n't be lame long, Doctor Thorne!"

"Lame!" He was shocked at so serious a word in connection with the great lady of the Court. "Oh, no, my dear young lady! It depends upon yourself. Rest—rest is the most efficacious cure for a sprain. I will come again this evening, and see how you are getting on. Now, mind, I beg of you: rest—perfect rest!"

"That young fellow has saved Miss Gresham a week in bed at least," he said to the earl, as they went downstairs. "If he had allowed the boot to remain on, or had let her use the foot, the inflammation would have been more serious. Who do you say he is? I don't remember the name."

"Humph!" responded the earl. "A new keeper. A good-looking young fellow, who is a kind of favorite with Miss Gresham. You are sure there is nothing more than a sprain? You will look in this evening without fail?"

Veronica got rid of Goodwin as soon as she could and, closing her eyes, leaned back and recalled the incidents of the morning. It was not only her foot that was burning; she was burning all over with a sensation that was not far removed from shame and self-reproach.

She had permitted Ralph Farringdon to carry her—he had held her in his arms twice that morning!—but, worse, she had—there was no use in endeavoring to stifle or dodge her accusing conscience—hobnobbed with him—there was no other word for it—as if he had been her equal; and, still worse, she had used all her feminine artifices to win his regard, to ensure his admiration!

In the moments of her physical weakness, under the strain of her pain and the influence of her gratitude, the meaning of the course she was pursuing had not been realized by her; but now—now she was away from him, she realized it fully, and it sent hot waves of blood through her veins.

She confessed to herself that she had not felt affronted, indignant when he had put his arms round her; that she had been conscious of a sense of pleasure in his society; that the sound of his voice was like music in her ears, and never more pleasant than when he had faltered under the influence of her eyes, her smile; that she had not been anxious for the carriage to arrive, was, indeed, almost sorry, notwithstanding the pain, when it did come; and that she had tempted, invited, almost forced him to take her in his arms again.

"Oh, I must be lost to all sense of shame and decency! Proud! I can't have more pride than a beggar woman!" she almost moaned. "To condescend to flirt—yes, I did flirt with him—with a—a—gamekeeper! Have I gone mad suddenly, or is it some bad strain of blood in me? How strong he was! And yet how gentle! And how delicately considerate! It was he who was anxious for the carriage to come. No gentleman could have been more considerate, more careful. And I behaved like—a Fanny Mason! Yes, that describes my conduct! I took advantage of my position, of his helplessness and chivalry, and made him admire me, and— Oh, I'm not fit to live: here at Lynce Court, at any rate, unless as a housemaid. Yes, that is my proper place, for I behaved just like one! Perhaps if I'd been a housemaid he would have responded; for I invited him, I did, I did, I did! And—should I have been angry if he had presumed— Oh, I am raving mad! I've been thinking of him ever since he crossed my path. I wish the man would go. Yes: I must get Lord Lynborough to send him away!"

Her cheeks were still burning when Goodwin came in on tiptoe.

"For goodness sake don't creep about as if I were dying!" remonstrated Veronica, with novel sharpness.

"I beg your pardon, miss!" said poor Goodwin, still flurried and emo-

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"Oh, miss, it's so kind of you to see me!" she said hurriedly; "and I do hope it's nothing serious. I met Mr. Ralph just now, and he said it was a bad sprain, he was afraid. How fortunate he should have been on the spot! But there, I told him last night that he was a lucky young man!"

"Last night?" said Veronica, rather coldly. "Yes, miss; he looked in with the fish you so kindly sent us, and stopped and had a bit of supper. Mother is always so pleased when he drops in, he's so pleasant and friendly and nice; o different t othe other keepers and men on the estate. He seemed quite anxious about you, miss, when I met him just now; and he said as how you were so brave, and made light of the hurt, though he knew it must have pained you terrible—"

(To be Continued.)

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