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The Old Marquis

OR,

The Girl of the Cloisters

CHAPTER XXII.

A RUINED LIFE.

Her lips opened and quivered, and she made a faint, futile attempt to draw away from his grasp. He saw the eyes bent wistfully upon him slowly fill with tears, felt her tremble like a leaf in the wind, and his heart gave a great leap of sorrowful, impatient love.

"My darling!" he murmured, soothingly. "I have frightened you! No, do not speak for a moment. There!" He paused, and held her gently, firmly, for a space, and looked at her, all his honest, passionate love in his eyes.

"Now, Lela, my dear, dear love, speak to me! Tell me what it all means! Why you ran away from me? Come, have some pity for me. You owe me something in return for all the misery I have undergone. There! You are not frightened now?"

"No," she murmured, "not frightened, but sorry—ah, so sorry!" and her lips quivered.

His brow knitted.

"Sorry," he repeated, bewildered, but patient. "Sorry that I have found you, Lela?"

"Yes," she said, looking at him and trying to drive the tender, wistful love from her eyes, in which it would shine and glow, try as she would.

"Yes, sorry, sorry!" she breathed, her hand pressed against her heart. "I have looked forward to this moment, dreaded it, for I knew that it must come. Oh, Edgar!"

His heart leaped as she breathed his name.

"Yes," he said, restraining the impulse to catch her to his heart and smother the beautiful, pale face with kisses. "Yes, you were right in that. You could not have hidden from me much longer, Lela. Now tell me why you have hidden at all! See, I am trying to be patient and calm—if you knew how hard it is you would be proud of me! But don't keep me in suspense longer than you can help. Here, come into the light. Ah, my darling, how I have longed for this moment! What a cruel week you have caused me," and his strong voice broke.

The tears ran slowly down her face, and she turned her head aside lest he should read her weakness in her eyes; and she meant to be so strong, so staunch!

"Will you not go now—at once?" she said, in a low voice. "Do not be cruel to us both—Lord Edgar—"

"Stop!" he said, and his lips twitched. "If you don't want to send me mad outright, don't call me Lord Edgar. Remember, I know nothing of your reason for deserting me."

"Deserting! Ah, yes, yes!" she murmured.

"Yes, deserting," he said, firmly; "that is what it was, Lela. How you could have done it I don't know. I could not have treated you so, my poor darling!"

"Oh, don't!" she pleaded. "Have some pity on me. Do you think it—cost—me—nothing?"

He smothered the passionate exclamation that trembled on his lips, and contented himself with saying, quickly:

"Why did you do it? Tell me, Lela, the truth, and all the truth."

And he drew her hands to his heart and held them there. She looked up at him, her beautiful eyes glowing solemnly with self-sacrifice.

"I left you, Edgar, because I knew that it was for your good that I should do so."

A hot flush covered his face, but he kept a tight hand on the reins. He meant to learn the whole truth before he gave way to the passion which surged in his heart and brain.

"Because it was for my good! Not for yours?" He looked at her and noticed how thin and pale—but still so lovely!—her face had grown. She seemed slighter than ever, so slight that he could have carried her across the stream with one arm now. "Not for yours?"

She shook her head with a little scornful wonder in her eyes.

"For mine? Ah, no!"

"Good!" he said, as if he had made one point. "You left me, knowing that I loved you as I did, and do, without one word of explanation, of good-by, even, for my good!" He laughed bitterly, impatiently. "For my good! Will you explain, Lela? You owe me a full explanation! I must be satisfied if I am to leave you, as you ask me, mustn't I?"

The voice was as gentle and tender as a woman's; it was as if he were addressing a child.

"Yes, for your good," she murmured, as if repeating a phrase she had well rehearsed. "Was I who loved you to drag you down to ruin?"

Light was beginning to dawn upon him.

"I see—you did not want to drag me down to ruin?"

"Ah, no!" she breathed, and her hand clasped his hand. "I did not know. When I let you love me, when I let you make me tell you that I loved you, I did not know. But I do know now."

"Know what?"

"That it would be your ruin to marry me—a mere nobody—you, the future marquis. You would have grown ashamed of me, and—and ceased to love me; and I should have been a weight and a clog in your way through the world. And—and—" The tears streamed down her face. "Ah, Edgar, I saw it all when he pointed it out—I saw it all, and I loved you too well to bring you harm!"

Lord Edgar's lips closed tightly—he, too, saw it all now; but he controlled himself with an effort.

She was silent, and her head drooped.

"You need not answer, Lela. I know. It was my father who told you this."

She was still silent.

"My affectionate and devoted father," he said, with the first touch of bitterness in his voice that had ever sounded in its connection with the marquis. "What else did he tell you, Lela?"

She shook her head sorrowfully.

"It does not matter," she murmured. "It was all true; the hard, bitter truth! I did not know—how should I?—that—that day when you told me you loved me, and I knew that I loved you. I thought nothing else mattered. But now—"

"But now the marquis has opened your eyes," he said, calmly, "you see differently?"

"Yes, I see that my love would only have brought you sorrow and misery, and so—so I left the Abbey, Edgar, and saved you."

The sense of the cruel, wickedly cruel, wrong that had been done them both silenced the passionate outburst that trembled on his lips.

He was silent for a moment, then he raised her hand to his lips and kissed it. She tremblingly withdrew it, as if she had condoned a sin.

"Yes, you left me—without a word; you sacrificed yourself, Lela; and then? How did you come here?"

"Grandfather had a friend at the school on the hill there"—he did not follow her glance, his eyes clung too hungrily to her face—"we came here thinking that he would help us, and he has done so. Grandfather teaches in the school. He—he is quite happy, and—" Her eyes filled again. "I must go now, Lord Edgar. You will let me go?"

He drew a long breath.

"We shall see!" But instead of releasing her arm he drew it through his own, and taking her with him, paced slowly up and down. What could he say, what could he do to move her?

Like most gentle women, Lela, when once her mind was made up, could be steadfast. The marquis, with his sardonic cleverness, had thrown such a glamour over her that it seemed to envelop her like a veil, to be a veritable wall between her and Edgar—a wall against which their hearts beat flutteringly on either side.

He looked down at her, at the lovely face, pale as a lily, with the tender red lips half parted with the pain and excitement of the situation; he could feel her trembling on his arm. All sorts of wild ideas flew into his head. What if he caught her up and carried her bodily to the inn and rode away with her? It would solve the difficulty in the easiest manner possible! But that could not be done, alas! Argue with her? She could beat him at argument, and give him points; her very love for him made her fearfully strong. She had become possessed by the idea that her love would ruin him, and how to disabuse her mind he knew not.

They walked up and down in the moonlight slowly, he with knitted brow and troubled spirit; she, woman-like, in a mingled ecstasy of pleasure and pain.

At last he stopped and spoke.

"Lela, listen to me! Look at me. I have thought over all you have said. "Perhaps"—his voice faltered at the approach of the falsehood—"you and my father are right; I might get tired of you."

A little sigh broke from her lips, and he saw her wince as if he had struck her. His heart smote him, but he persisted.

"I never saw it in that light before. It may be true. So we'll part."

"Yes," she murmured, brokenly, and her hand slipped from his arm; he was about to catch at it, but restrained himself. "I don't know what will become of me! Perhaps I shall marry some one whom you and the marquis think more suitable; perhaps I shall go abroad—to Mexico—anywhere; it doesn't matter. I know for a certainty that, whether you would have ruined my life, as you call it, it is ruined for the present."

"Ah!" she breathed. "If we had never met!"

"Yes," he said, slowly. "But we did. And now you have convinced me we had better part, I suppose."

"Yes," she said, and her hands clasped despairfully, as her eyes grew hungrily to his face. "Yes, now at once. Ah! I hope—I hope we shall never meet again! I thought that I had suffered all I could suffer in the last week, but to-night—"

His lips twitched.

"Where do you live?" he asked in a low voice.

She moved her hand heavily toward a lane at the side of the churchyard, and he inclined his head.

"Let me see you there safely?"

"No," she said, almost inaudibly. "I am quite safe. I—I often come out at night alone—nearly every night. Do not come with me."

"Very well," he said. His heart beat tumultuously; he was playing a bold game. "Good-by, Lela! Good-by!" and he held out his hand.

She put hers into it, and the little hand struck like fire in his. Her lips moved, though he heard no sound, and pressing her hand between his, he turned slowly and moved away.

He had not gone a dozen steps when he heard her cry his name. It was a wail, a desolate wail of entreaty and despair. The next moment she was on his breast, her slight frame convulsed with sobs, her hands clutching his arms, her eyes upturned to his with wild, helpless love.

"Oh, no, no," she panted. "I can not let you go! I can not! I can not! Oh, Edgar, my love, my love! Forgive me! I can not lose you! Oh, what am I doing—I who had meant to be so strong and brave? But I can not! It is like tearing the heart out of my body! Edgar, stay with me! Don't go! Ah, don't go!"

He was silent for a moment as he pressed her to him and kissed the silken hair and the pale, passion-laden lips. She was transformed; it was she who pleaded now by look and gesture, not he.

His artifice had succeeded. The great woman's love had conquered, and all doubt vanished. She lay in his arms, sobbing and panting, fearing to release her hold on him lest she should lose him, her lover, her god!

(To be Continued.)

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(Continued from Yesterday.)

I will first deal with our local Trade, using the year 1913-14 as a standard, and by reference to the figures it will be observed that the Total Trade has increased from $30,0000,000 in 1913-14 to $57,000,000, in 1917-18, with the prospect, as far as can be learned from the Customs figures to date, of the total exceeding $60,000,000 for the current fiscal year, the augmentation in the past 12 months be-

The trend o four trade development, as a result of the War-time elements of disturbance introduced therein, is illustrated in broad outline by the figures showing the Imports

IMPORTS

Year	Britain	Canada
1913-14	3,826,529	4,681,047
1914-15	3,311,945	4,509,827
1915-16	2,579,614	5,870,456
1916-17	2,620,033	7,412,300
1917-18	2,248,781	11,107,642

EXPORTS

Year	Britain	Canada
1913-14	3,256,446	1,971,809
1914-15	3,196,353	1,394,663
1915-16	4,582,379	2,021,772
1916-17	4,836,074	2,042,117
1917-18	3,822,931	2,750,990

It will be noted that there has been a very remarkable increase in the imports from and exports to the neighbouring countries of Canada and the United States, especially in the past two years, a circumstance due in part to the difficulties in obtaining goods from the British Isles owing to war-time conditions, but it is to be hoped that there will be a speedy and substantial resumption of trade between Newfoundland and the Mother Country, and a restoration to the largest possible extent of the commercial intercourse which was so prominent a feature in the economic life of this Island prior to the war.

It is gratifying to know, moreover, that the commercial relations of Newfoundland with the outside world have been maintained in such satisfactory fashion, especially in the latter period of the war when shortage of shipping proved a very serious handicap. It will be remembered that prior to the war we had the advantage of the Black Diamond steamers running from Montreal, the Furness steamers running from Halifax, the Bowring steamers from New York, and the Allan and Furness lines from England, besides occasional steamers from various places; but gradually all these lines were eliminated until only the Furness boats remained operating between Liverpool, St. John's, and Halifax; and the Bowring Company giving a New York service which was seriously hampered when the "Stephano" was torpedoed and which became more crippled by the tragic loss of the "Florizel" 15 months ago.

Looking back now on the difficulties that had to be faced, I think the Committee will agree with me that it is little short of marvellous how we were able to maintain our trade relations with the outside world, bring in the necessaries required, and send away our produce under the circumstances which had to be experienced during all this period. This has been rendered possible, in a large measure, by the close co-operation promoted between the Commercial Community and the Government by the Ministry of Shipping, an association which has resulted in enabling some of the most difficult problems presenting themselves to us to be successfully solved.

In this endeavour, too, Newfoundland's merchant shipping was materially increased, and the fleet of for-

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