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E. W. Moore

The Heir of Bayneham

—AND—
Lady Hutton's Ward.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The pretty childish voice prevailed, and the earl said, with a smile, "I will. At what hour do you dine?"

"At seven," replied Captain Massey. "Call for me at my chambers," he continued, giving Lord Bayneham a card, "and we will drive down together."

"At your chambers!" said Lord Bayneham. "Why, are you not living at home?"

"No," said the captain, and again a dull flush burned his face. "My mother has visitors in the house, and I have business in London. Call for me about five."

Then they parted, and Lord Bayneham returned home.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Lord Bayneham told the countess and Barbara Earle of his meeting with Captain Massey, and of the beautiful little child who was with them; the finest, sweetest child he had ever seen. Lady Bayneham thought him in better spirits. He smiled as he described the boy clinging to him, and his face had not looked so bright for years. Lady Bayneham's eyes filled with tears as she listened to him.

"I am thankful for anything that arouses his interest," she said to Barbara Earle, "but my heart aches when I think that he will never smile upon a child of his own."

"We will hope for the best," said Barbara, "sorrow endures for a time. Joy generally comes after it, and if not joy, peace."

Lord Bayneham was haunted by the little face; it shone before him all day, he saw it in his dreams by night—the sweet trusting eyes, the bright clustering curls—and he smiled at his own folly.

"I must be in love with the child," he said. "I long to see him again."

On the following morning the reserved, melancholy Lord Bayneham spent more than an hour in one of the finest toy shops in London and selected a parcel of toys that would gladden the heart of any child. He was punctual to his appointment and found Captain Massey ready for him.

"The weather is fine; we shall have a glorious drive," said the captain; "but what is this enormous parcel? It came some hours since, to be left here for you?"

"It contains nothing but toys for Lionel," said Lord Bayneham, blushing like a school-girl as he spoke. "It was a glorious drive; the sweet

May evening was full of beauty; earth and sky seemed to smile. The hawthorn and chestnut were in bloom, the fragrance of spring blossoms filled the air. They said but little. Captain Massey seemed lost in thought and Lord Bayneham was dreaming of the May morning years ago when he had first met the fair young girl who seemed lost to him forever.

It was a sad face upon which Mrs. Massey gazed when she welcomed her old favorite to the house. "My son told me how altered you were," she said, holding out both hands to Lord Bayneham. "Life has not been a path of roses for me," he replied.

"Nor for any of us," interrupted the lady. "I have gathered more thorns than flowers."

Mrs. Massey was a stately gentlewoman, one of the old school, kind and charitable, yet dignified and reserved, and a firm believer in etiquette. If she had a fault, her son declared it was in being too frigidly correct and proper.

She was dressed as Lord Bayneham remembered always to have seen her, in the stiffest of brocades and the most costly of lace caps. She made many inquiries about Lady Bayneham and Miss Earle, yet her visitor thought there was something unusual in her manner. She talked more than he had ever heard her, and seemed afraid of a moment's silence. It was a relief when the child came in and ran straight up to Lord Bayneham.

Ah, what was it? Why did his eyes fill with tears as the tender arms clung to him? Why did the sweet, childish voice seem to reach the depths of his heart, and stir fountains that had long been sealed and dry?

"My son tells me you have taken a wonderful fancy to this little boy," said Mrs. Massey. "He is a noble little fellow, and we are all fond of him."

"I have never loved a child before," said Lord Bayneham, and his lips trembled as he spoke; "and, in my solitary life, I do not think I shall ever care so much for one again."

"Would you like to like with this gentleman, Lionel?" asked Mrs. Massey.

"Yes," said the child; "but I cannot, because I cannot leave mamma."

"I am to be introduced in proper form to-day," said Lord Bayneham; "What is my little friend's name? I shall ask permission to take him down to Bayneham with me."

"Would you like to see Lionel's mamma, and ask her permission?" said Mrs. Massey.

moving, as one whose senses are wrapped in a dream. He saw a small, pretty room, where fragrant flowers were blooming, and golden sunbeams came in through clouds of white lace. He saw—was this a dream? a golden head raised as he entered, a beautiful face, sweet and pure and tender; he saw violet eyes full of tears, quivering lips that tried in vain to utter his name; he saw two little white hands clasped as he had seen them clasped years ago, and a thick mist swam before him, a noise as of rushing waters filled his ears. A little voice aroused him; the child ran from him to the lady.

"This is mamma," he said, proudly turning to Lord Bayneham. "It was no dream—it was his own wife clinging to him, her tender arms clasped round him, her beautiful face wet with tears so near his own, the golden head drooping on his breast. It was no fancy, no dream, but a real, glorious truth: Once before he had wept like a child—it was when he lost her."

Again the strength of his manhood seemed to desert him, and warm tears fell upon the golden head. "Claude," whispered a gentle voice, "can you ever forgive me—forgive me for doubting you, and leaving you? I can never pardon myself."

"The fault was my own," he replied; "I was jealous, and impatient." "No body speaks to me," said a pitiful voice, and a little face looked up in wonder; then Lord Bayneham remembered the boy—he had called Hilda mamma. He looked once into her face.

"Who is it?" he whispered—"this little one who calls you mother?"

For all answer she placed the child in his arms. "It is your son," she said; "your son and mine."

"Do not scold me," she said when that trance of happiness was broken, "do not scold me, Claude. When I left you, I did not know that Heaven would give me this priceless gift. My baby was born here, six months after I left your house. I meant to send him to you when he was old enough to leave me."

"Hush!" said Lord Bayneham; "do not say such words as those, Hilda, darling. This is a golden hour—we will not spoil it."

(To be continued.)

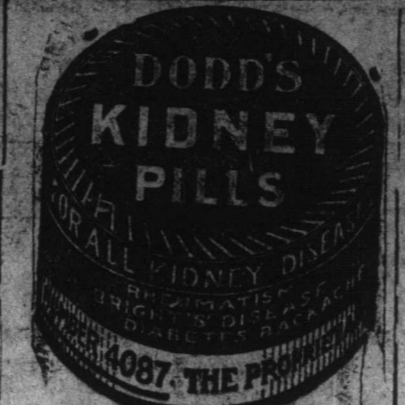
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With the dark skirt and jacket is worn the brilliantly colored over-bow of crepe, kasha or leather. A spry hat of almond green hemp braid is thrust through with two wide gray and green curls.

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