

MAGIC READ THE BAKING LABEL NO ALUM POWDER

The Earl's Son; TWO HEARTS UNITED.

CHAPTER II. The footman called "Hi!" and the young man looked over his shoulder. He hesitated, then came back with obvious reluctance.

"You want a situation as game-keeper, my man?" said his lordship. The young fellow nodded.

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face, and her under lip was caught by the white teeth, as if she longed to ride after him and make some amends. But pride held her back, and with a shrug of her shoulders she rode on.

How should she know that the shadow of her fate was riding behind her; that the curtain of her life's drama was up and the tragedy had begun?

CHAPTER III. The young fellow who had given his name as Ralph Farrington strode to the cottage. The door was open, and he looked into the neat little sitting-room, in which a young girl was seated with her back to the window reading a novelette.

She started as she heard his footstep, and slipping the novelette in her pocket, looked quickly into the kitchen beyond, where a woman was ironing. Then she rose and stood eyeing him with a faint blush.

"I beg your pardon," said Ralph. "I've brought your puppy; it is yours, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes; thank you!" she said, coming forward to take it from him; then she shrank back.

"Oh, it is hurt—is bleeding!" "No, no; it is all right," he assured her, with a smile. "It nearly got run over, but I managed to pick it up in time. In doing so the young lady's horse must have struck me. Oh, I'm not hurt!" he added, promptly, at her glance of alarm and pity; "not in the least; a mere scratch."

The woman in the kitchen, hearing voices, came forward with the iron in her hand.

"Mother, this gentleman has saved Polly's puppy, and has got hurt," explained the girl.

"Dear, dear!" responded the mother. "Here, Fanny, take the iron and go on with those collars. I hope you're not much hurt—sir!" She added the "sir" after a doubtful glance at his clothes.

"Not at all," said Ralph. "I'll show you."

He drew back the sleeve of his coat and shirt and bared his muscular arm. There was a nasty gash just below the elbow, and it was still bleeding. The woman uttered a little cry of distress and called out:

"Bring in a basin of warm water and a towel—quick, Fanny!"

"Pon my word, I'm very sorry to trouble you," Ralph said in his pleasant voice; "you'll find there's nothing the matter when it's washed, and he laughed as he held his arm over the basin.

"It's a nasty cut," she said, as she bathed it. "A horse, you said; a young lady riding it?"

"It must be Miss Veronica," murmured the girl who stood by, her eyes fixed on Ralph's face with an intent expression. "I saw her ride across the moor."

"I daresay," said Ralph. "A very beautiful girl with grey eyes and dark hair."

The woman nodded, but looked up at him with a little surprise. He looked like a working-man; but the working-men of the place did not speak of Miss Veronica as a "girl," but as a "young lady."

"That was her uncle with her, I suppose?" he said. "Lord—"

"Lord Lynborough; yes. You must be a stranger not to know his lordship."

"I am," he assented. "Just from Australia. I walked over from Halsey this morning."

keeper. "His lordship sent me to the head-keeper."

"Geoffrey Burchett," said Mrs. Mason, adding, "Well—I hope you'll get it," she added, so doubtfully that Ralph looked up and smiled.

"That sounds as if you don't think I shall."

She shook her head.

"Geoffrey Burchett's a hard man to please—not that it's my place to speak against him; for he's an old friend. He lives all alone by himself in the hut and keeps himself to himself, as you may say. Fanny here goes over every morning and does for him, so to speak."

Ralph nodded and smiled at the girl as if he thought Geoffrey Burchett highly favored by such ministrations, and Fanny blushed and dropped her eyes before the frank, ready way of this amazingly good-looking young man, who leant back in his chair and drank his glass of milk with the air—well, of one of the gentlemen of the Court, notwithstanding he was only a game-keeper.

"His lordship seems rather a haughty kind of old gentleman," he said after a pause, during which he helped himself to another slice of bread.

Mrs. Mason looked rather taken aback at his free-and-easy way of criticising the great earl.

"Well, yes, he is," she admitted; "but he's got reason. His lordship's the greatest man in these parts. Mr.—"

Ralph supplied his name.

"Mr. Farrington. You've seen the Court, maybe—"

"Not yet."

"Well, of course it belongs to Lord Lynborough, and all Lynborough and most of Halsey as well, not to speak of places in Ireland and Scotland—"

Ralph laughed, the bright, infectious, careless laugh which Fanny found so catching that she found herself echoing it half unconsciously.

"It's kind of him to leave some part of England to other people," he said, "especially seeing that it's so small."

Mrs. Mason stared at him.

"His lordship's a very great man," she repeated, with the helplessness of her class when confronted by something original.

"Well, he doesn't look particularly happy," observed Ralph.

The boldness of the remark seemed to stagger Mrs. Mason; but, with the candour which was characteristic as her dullness, she said:

"Well, now you mention it, he don't. No, his lordship isn't a happy man."

"Is he married?" asked Ralph, with just a trifle more than polite interest.

Mrs. Mason shook her head. "No, his lordship's never been married; and until Miss Veronica came he lived alone at the Court or one of his other places."

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been the same since she came. She goes about amongst the people and takes an interest in the estate, and— and looks after things as they wasn't looked after before she came.

"I see: a kind of Lady Bountiful," said Ralph; but neither mother nor daughter seemed to understand the allusion, and stared at him vacantly.

"And when he dies—I suppose even so great a man as his lordship must die some day, or do they live for ever?—who succeeds him, who comes into his greatness?"

"Mr. Talbot Denby, his nephew," said Mrs. Mason, rather stiffly.

"Oh! And what kind of man is he?" asked Ralph, taking out his pipe, but slipping it into his pocket again with an apologetic gesture.

"Oh, please smoke!" murmured Fanny; and, at a nod of permission from Mrs. Mason, he lit up.

"Mr. Talbot is—is a proper gentleman," she said. "He's a member of Parliament, and very—clever." She spoke the word as if it were a kind of ineptitude to apply the adjective to one of the Lynborough family.

"He don't often come to the Court, because he and the earl don't get on very well together. In fact, his lordship don't get on very well with anybody. He's quarrelled with all his people, and—and that's why he lives alone, barring Miss Veronica."

"Amiable old gentleman!" commented Ralph, smiling.

"His lordship is—his lordship," retorted Mrs. Mason, stiffly.

(To be Continued.)

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