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The Countess of Landon.

CHAPTER XXII.

"I say 'bravo,' too, dear!" she murmured.
Madge's face was scarlet, and she looked from one to the other.
Perhaps the countess, who had sat with unmoved face, was moved to pity, for she rose as the signal for the ladies to retire.
Irene linked her arm in Madge's.
"Come, dear," she said.
Seymour rose to open the door, but Royce strode before him, and as Irene passed he bent his head and whispered:
"Thank you, Irene. Be kind to her."
Irene raised her eyes to his for a moment only, but said nothing, and the ladies passed out.
Seymour went to the head of the table.
"Will you have some port, Royce?" he said, blandly.
Royce stood looking down at the cloth for a moment, then he raised his head and looked full into Seymour's eyes.
"I want a word with you," he said; and he made a sign to the butler to leave the room.
When the door had closed on that grave and solemn functionary, Royce said, sternly:
"Seymour, I want to ask you a question."
"Certainly, my dear Royce," said Seymour, filling his glass and eyeing him sideway.
"It is a very simple one and it is this: Is it to be peace or war between us?"

CHAPTER XXIII

Seymour affected to start.
"My dear Royce," he said in a tone more sad than angry, "why should you say such a question? If you know me better you would know that it is quite unnecessary, and one that I do not deserve. Is it true that you have never lost an opportunity of insulting me—that only one week ago you attacked me with—er—physical violence, I bear the bruises caused by your brutality even now. But I trust, Royce, that I know the duty of forgiveness, and that I try to perform it. And I think you will admit that you have nothing to complain of. Most men in my position would have resented your violence. Most men would have protested and prevented the introduction into their family circle of a—er—the kind of person you have chosen to make your wife."
Royce's hand closed on his wine-glass, and it snapped off at the stem, the red wine flowing blood-like over the white cloth.
"Leave my wife—leave Madge alone!" he said, hoarsely. "You—though you are the Earl of Landon—are not fit to speak her name. I know it, feel it! And you—you dare to try and hold her up to ridicule!"
"My dear Royce," murmured Seymour, watching the fingers that had broken the wine-glass with an apprehensive closeness, "I hold your wife up to ridicule! How could you make

such a mistake? I—er—am the last man to do such a thing. Why, it is only to-day that I said to her ladyship: 'Royce's wife must be received—now that we have consented to receive her—as one of ourselves. We must forget, or behave as if we forgot, that she was—ahem!—what she was, and remember, that she is poor Royce's wife. Ask her ladyship, and she will tell you that those were my very words.'"
"Poor Royce!" said Royce, fiercely. "I do not ask or want your pity."
Seymour gloated over the wound he had inflicted.
"I beg your pardon, Royce; it—er—slipped from me unawares. Of course you do not want pity. You are quite happy. With your peculiar nature you cannot understand the blow you have dealt the family pride. Just so. But please do not talk of peace or war—between us. You pain me, Royce—you do, indeed. And after—well, I did not intend to mention it; but—well, yes, I will do so. You are not aware that I have been using all my influence to get you reinstated in the army—he uttered the lie with suave glibness—"and I think I should have succeeded. But, of course, now that is—er—out of the question. I imagine that even you—shall I say self-reliance and—er—self-confidence?—would not be sufficient to enable you to join your old comrades. They might ask inconvenient questions about—er—your wife."

Royce stood, as men have stood under physical torture, steady, calm and enduring. Seymour watched him and revelled in his agony.
"Only the other day—let me see; it was Tuesday I was in town—I met Lord Rochester. He had seen you at the theatre—seen you and Madge; and he was full of questions about her."
Royce bit his lip.
"Let them ask what they please," he said, between his teeth. "She is—why," he broke out, "even you must admit that she is a lady at heart."
"Yes, yes! quite so," purred Seymour. "But in society one doesn't care much about ladies at heart when they—forgive me, Royce; don't be angry—when they don't know the use of a finger-bowl."
Royce sunk into his chair and wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and Seymour, though he maintained his same benevolent aspect, gloated over him.
"And they ask inconvenient questions, my dear Royce. I told Rochester that your wife came from an old Spanish family—I believe the gypsies date their origin from Spain? But though Rochester received it as gospel, others, and especially the women—the women, dear Royce—will not be put off so easily."

Royce rose, looking tall and gigantic beside his puny brother.
"Spare yourself the trouble of lying," he said, grimly. "Tell them the whole word—the truth. Neither Madge nor I shall be ashamed."
Seymour smiled.
"Bravely said!" he murmured, sipping his wine. "But, my dear Royce, we have to think of our mother and—er—Irene."

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Seymour uttered Irene's name softly, and glanced up at Royce's troubled face with keen, unctuous enjoyment.

"I think I ought to tell you, Royce," he went on, suavely, "that Irene has promised—well, very nearly promised—to make me the happiest of men."
Royce started and his face went white.
"You!" he exclaimed, staring at his brother.
Seymour allowed himself a minute of keen enjoyment.
"Yes," he murmured, softly; "Irene has almost promised to be my wife. I hope to be able to ask for your congratulations before long."

"Irene—your wife?" murmured Royce, hoarsely.
Seymour smiled up at him.
"You seem surprised, my dear Royce," he said, still gloatingly; "and yet, who could see her without loving her?"
"Your wife?" ejaculated Royce. "Impossible!"
Seymour smiled with hypocritical meekness.
"I understand, my dear Royce," he murmured. "You don't think I am worthy of her. But who is?"
"Ah! who is?" said Royce, dreamily. "Echo answers—'No one!'" responded Seymour, cheerfully. "Will you have some more wine?"

Royce sunk into his chair and poured himself out a tumbler of claret unsteadily, and drank it in silence.
Irene, the lily maiden—the purest, sweetest girl in all the world—Seymour's wife! And only the other day she had given him—Royce—her lock of hair, and shed tears as she hid him farewell! For the moment, thinking of Irene, he forgot even Madge.
Meanwhile, Madge was waging her battle in the drawing-room.
The half hour, after-dinner inter-realm, so to speak, during which womanhood, shut up alone, pines for the appearance of the men, is said to be the most trying thirty minutes of the day. Some women cast themselves in easy-chairs or on sofas, and sleep; others find a familiar and trusty friend, and exchange gossip—that is, scandal—while others resign themselves to fate and indulge in fancy needle work; but all unanimously sigh for the tea-tray and the sound of masculine footsteps.

The countess went straight to her easy-chair beside the fire, and holding a screen between her and the blaze, maintained a profound silence.
Madge stood irresolute, not knowing what to do; but Irene drew her to an ottoman just out of hearing of the countess, who looked like a statue in gray satin, and from an exquisitely decorated work-basket took some embroidery.
"Are you fond of embroidery, Madge?" she said.
Madge looked from her to the work and shook her head.
"I don't know," she replied; "I have never done any. I used to mend Tony's clothes—and—and Jack's—I mean Royce's."

"And who was Tony?" asked Irene, her white fingers twinkling about the work.
"Tony was a little boy in the camp, but"—she stopped and crimsoned—"but I must not talk about him or—er—my people, here."
Irene colored.
"You can talk about them or anything else to me, dear," she said.
Madge shook her head.
"No," she said; and there was a touch of sadness in her voice. "I must not. It is all different—different and strange. You cannot understand."
"Perhaps I can, just a little," said Irene in her low, musical voice. "If I were taken away from my friends—the countess and—and the rest—I should remember them and think of them; and it is the same with you."
"I must try and forget them," said Madge. "I have never spoken of them to Ja—I mean Royce, since the day we left the camp. Yes, I must forget them."

Irene looked at her, with tender pity.
"That seems hard," she said, almost to herself; "for they were kind to you."
"Yes," said Madge, eagerly—"oh, yes. They were very kind, and the night we left I stole into the camp and kissed Lottie and Mother Katie. They were asleep."
Her eyes filled with tears.
The countess looked up.
"Sing something, Irene," she said. Irene took Madge's hand.
"Come to the piano with me," she said, as an elder sister addresses a younger.

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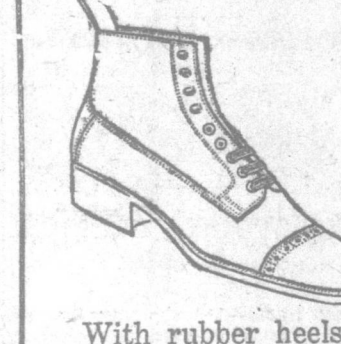
(to be continued.)

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Beauty From Herbs
In the time of Cleopatra and Helen of Troy beauty potions, to which marvellous properties were attributed, were made from flowers and herbs and were eagerly sought after by the would-be beauties of those days. Many of these recipes have been handed down to us and there is no doubt that they are beneficial for our grandmothers, who used them regularly and to whom the modern beauty specialist and her up-to-date methods were unknown, often preserved the beauty and freshness of their complexions till an advanced age.
The camomile flower, the most renowned and one of the oldest known beautifiers, is used both as a beverage for clearing the complexion and as a lotion for softening and whitening it. As a lotion it is also credited with astringent properties and is used very largely for closing enlarged pores and toning up relaxed muscles. As a beverage the camomile tea should be taken the last thing at night. It is made in a similar way to ordinary tea. Three or four of the dried flowers are placed in an earthenware teapot and half a pint of boiling water is poured over them. They are then allowed to "draw" for five minutes and the tea is poured off and sweetened with a lump of sugar. As a lotion the camomile preparation is made slightly stronger; about five of the dried flowers are placed in a bowl and half a pint of boiling water poured over them. The bowl is then covered for about ten minutes and when the lotion has slightly cooled the skin is sponged with a small pad of cotton wool.
The homely parsley also has

beautifying properties. If the skin is dark and dingy-looking, to whiten it make a parsley lotion and use it regularly for a week or two. Take a handful of parsley, wash it well, place it in a small saucepan with a pint and a half of boiling water and boil slowly for a quarter of an hour. Then strain through muslin and add ten grains each of powdered alum, powdered borax, and pulverised camphor. Rub over the skin with a pad of cotton wool.

Fasting Beneficial
TOKIO—(Canadian Press)—Following two years of experiments I work at the government institute of dietetics, here scientists say that the practice of fasting leads to better physical condition.
Experiments have been conducted on five people of different times, and in each case the subject has shown considerable improvement. The five people were of different weights, some too thin, some too fat and one of average weight. The fat subjects lost weight, while the thin people put on flesh, and the single average subject reported that he felt much more vigorous. All of the subjects had better appetites following the period of fasting.
"I am convinced that fasting leads to enormous benefits to the individual, both mentally and physically," stated Dr. Hideo Takahira, chief of staff of dietitians. "It is interesting to note that 2,250 people fasted at the famous

Narita Fudo Temple in China during the past five years, and they discovered that their physical condition was improved they used the change to the power of fasting instead of to the period of fasting. The longest period of fasting to which a patient at the institute was subjected a patient at the institute was thirty days."

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