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The Imprisoned Heiress —OR— The Spectre of Egremont.

CHAPTER XXVI

"No one but herself. She loves another, and—"

"Who is he?" "Lyle Indor."

Lord Egremont uttered a groan, remembering his wife's late apprehensions with regard to her nephew and his ward.

"How do you know this?" he asked. In reply Lord Ashcroft detailed the events of the preceding evening, so far as the heiress was concerned. He told her and how he had caught the garden at that late hour; of the woman who came down the walk; of his discovery of her identity; of her meeting Indor in the pavilion; of the conversation he had overheard; and he concluded:

"Do you not see, my lord, that no tie of honor binds me to the woman who wishes for my death that she may marry another? I would rather forfeit every penny I own than take to my bosom such a wife, even though I did not love another."

Lord Egremont could not but own that her hero was right.

"It is better for you to forfeit something than that she should forfeit all," he said. "Perhaps it's all for the best, Lord Ashcroft. Alexina will doubtless exult in her freedom and will marry Lyle. I think we can trust to them both for our future prosperity, for Lyle is fond of his aunt. A marriage with him would bring her nearer to us. The Indors are not an unsuitable connection even for an Egremont, though they are not titled."

The earl spoke cheerfully and hopefully, already half-reconciled to the change of suitors.

But nevertheless, there was evidently considerable disappointment that Lord Ashcroft was not to be the husband of the heiress—a disappointment mingled with anxiety.

Its cause lay deeper than Lord Ashcroft could even imagine.

Lord Egremont said our hero, breaking the momentary silence, "as I am no longer bound to your ward, I offer myself as the suitor of your daughter, the Lady Aimee. I love her

as I shall never love another, as I have never before loved. My acquaintance with her has been brief, but it has comprised more interviews than you are aware of. She returns my love, and has promised to become my wife. Will you not give her to me?"

The earl shaded his pale face with his hands, and said, hoarsely: "You know not what you ask. Her birth—"

"I care nothing for her birth," interrupted Aimee's lover, impetuously. "Her beauty and goodness are sufficient dowry, without a lofty name. My lord, if Aimee were the legitimate daughter of a king, I could not feel prouder to claim her hand, to know that she loved me, and to render her my homage. Her ears shall never be pained by hearing the secret of her parentage. The world shall never know that she is your child. Will you not consent to our marriage?"

Lord Egremont had listened to this appeal with agitation, and he now shook his head, saying: "I wish it might be, Lord Ashcroft; but it cannot. If I had but known—if I had foreseen. But what am I saying? Forget Aimee's existence, Lionel, and marry some one suitable to you."

"That one is Aimee. Why let a false pride embitter the existence of that angel? My lord," he added, with a sudden thought, "if Aimee were my wife, it would be my greatest pleasure to settle a handsome annuity upon her parents."

"No, it cannot be. I—I dare not, Lord Ashcroft. Her existence must not be known."

At this juncture there was a low knock on the door.

Lord Ashcroft answered the summons in person.

It was the Lady Lorean who stood there. She had come to seek a private interview with her brother, and was surprised to find him visited by his host.

"It is my sister, my lord," said Lord Ashcroft, as the earl turned his head. "If you will excuse me a few minutes, I will escort her back to her room."

The earl assented, and Lord Ashcroft went with his sister to her door. Here she urged him to come in for a few minutes, saying that she should not sleep from anxiety if he did not, and he yielded to her entreaties.

Meanwhile, the earl leaned his head upon his hands, and gave himself up to gloom and remorse.

"If I had not committed that fatal act!" he mused. "The avenging hand of fate is lifted against me!"

He was so absorbed in his own reflections that he did not see the door open and shut stealthily, nor hear the soft footstep that came gliding over the floor toward him.

Had he looked up he would have seen a burly form, a pair of hands outstretched, clad in cheap cotton gloves, and a masked face.

Lord Ashcroft's enemy was before him.

The sinister intruder crept forward his eyes gleaming from the almond shaped apertures in that ghastly mask, and one hand clutching a sharp-pointed dagger.

Still Lord Egremont did not look up.

The masked assassin came on softly through the dim half-light, until he stood but a yard distant from the unsuspecting earl.

And then he suddenly leaped forward and strove to bury his knife in the back of Lord Egremont's neck. (To be continued.)

The Heir to Beecham Park

CHAPTER I

"We have just picked her from under the roof of a second-class carriage," the porter explained. "We were turning it over—you see, sir, it fell some distance from the rest of the carriage—and when we lifted it we found this mite a-singing to herself and nursing her dolly, as she calls this piece of wood. It's by Heaven's mercy she ain't been smashed to bits; but she ain't got not even a bruise. She must belong to some one," he added, looking round again.

A lady in the crowd here stepped forward. "Give her to me," she said, kindly. "Perhaps she was travelling alone; if so, that will be explained, no doubt by a letter or something." But the child clung to the porter, her pretty brows puckered, her red lips quivering. "Mamma!" she cried, plaintively. "I want my mamma!"

The doctor turned and looked at the child, and at that instant she suddenly wriggled and twisted herself from the porter's arms to the ground, and, running to the silent form lying on the bank, crouched down and clutched a bit of the brown dress in her hands.

"Mamma!" she said, confidently, looking round with her great, blue eyes on the circle of faces, all of which expressed horror, pity and sadness; "Mamma! mamma!"

The doctor stooped, drew back the handkerchief, and glanced from the living to the dead. "Yes," he said, abruptly; "this is her mother. Heaven have mercy on her, poor little soul!"

The lady who had come forward went up to the child, her eyes filled with tears. She loosened the dress from the small fingers.

"Mamma! must be good," she said, tenderly, "and not wake her mamma. Mamma has gone to sleep."

The child looked at the still form, the covered face.

"Mamma! seep," she repeated; "Mamma! no peak, mamma!—be good," and she lowered her voice to a whisper and repeated, "be good." She suffered herself to be lifted in the kind, motherly arms, and pressed her bit of wood closer to her, humming in a low voice.

"We must find out who she is," the doctor said, his eyes wandering again and again to the dead woman. "She must be carried to the town; there will be an inquest."

The baby, cooing to her strange doll looked up as they moved across the field. She put up one little hand and rubbed away a tear from the motherly face.

"No kye," she said, in her pretty lisping fashion. "Mamma! dood—she no kye."

The lady kissed the small lips. "Mamma! is a sweet angel," she whispered; "and now she shall come with me to a pretty place and have some nice dinner."

(To be continued.)

A passenger at this moment pointed to some vehicles coming toward them. They could not drive close to the spot, as a plowed field stretched between the railway and the road, and one by one the group dispersed, all stopping to pat the child's face and speak to her. The doctor gave some orders to the porter who had found the child, and a litter, formed of a broken carriage door, was hastily improvised. As the crowd withdrew, he knelt down by the dead woman, and with reverent hands, searched in the pockets for some clue. He drew out a purse, shabby and small, and, opening this, found only a few shillings and a railway ticket, a second-class return from Suston to Chesterham. In an inner recess of the purse there was a folded paper, which disclosed a curl of ruddy-gold hair when opened, and on which was written: "Baby Margery's hair, August 19th."

The doctor carefully replaced it. A key and a tiny, old-fashioned worthless locket were the remainder of the contents. He checked a little sigh as he closed the purse and then proceeded to search further. A pocket handkerchief, with the letter "M" in one corner, and a pair of dogskin gloves, worn and neatly mended, were the next object, and one letter, which—after replacing the gloves and handkerchief—he opened hurriedly. The lady, still holding the child in her arms, watched him anxiously. The envelopes, which was already broken, was addressed to "M., care of Post Office, Newtown, Middlesex." The doctor unfolded the note. It ran as follows:

Mrs. Huntley will engage "M." if proper references are forwarded. Mrs. Huntley would require "M." to begin her duties as maid, should her references prove satisfactory, as soon as possible. "M.'s" statement that she speaks French and German fluently has induced Mrs. Huntley to reconsider the question of salary. She will now give "M." twenty-five pounds per annum, for which sum "M." must undertake to converse daily with Mr. Huntley's daughter in French and German, in addition to her duties as maid. Mrs. Huntley desires that "M." will send her real name by return of post.

Upton Manor, near Liddlefield, Yorkshire, Nov. 15th, 18—

The doctor handed the note to the lady, who read it through quickly.

"That does not give much information," he observed, rising from his knees.

"Dated yesterday—received this morning. We must telegraph to this Mrs. Huntley; who knows—the poor creature may have sent her reference, with her full name, before starting from London."

"Yes, you are right; we must do that. But what is to become of the child? Are you staying here for long, madam?"

"No," replied the lady; "I had intended to travel straight on to the North. But I shall remain in Chesterham for the night, and continue my journey to-morrow. I wish I could delay it longer; but, unfortunately, my son is ill in Edinburgh, and I must get to him as soon as possible. However, I will take care of this poor little mite to-night. I hope by the morning we shall have discovered her friends and relations."

"If you will do that," said the doctor, "I will see to the mother. I must have the body carried to the infirmary."

He beckoned, as he spoke, to the porter, who was standing at a little distance, talking to the crowd of natives who had arrived to clear the line, and the dead woman was lifted on to the litter, and covered with a rug belonging to the lady who had taken charge of the child. She watched the proceedings with a feeling of unpeakable sadness, and, as the melancholy burden was carried toward one of the cabs, she clasped the child closer to her breast, and tears stole down her cheeks.

The baby, cooing to her strange doll looked up as they moved across the field. She put up one little hand and rubbed away a tear from the motherly face.

"No kye," she said, in her pretty lisping fashion. "Mamma! dood—she no kye."

The lady kissed the small lips. "Mamma! is a sweet angel," she whispered; "and now she shall come with me to a pretty place and have some nice dinner."

(To be continued.)

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A Glimpse Into the Remote Past

"Every year the work of the archaeologists gives us vistas of a more remote past. From year to year we have to revise our ideas of the time which has passed since man learned the skill to make his life more comfortable than that of the beasts," says the Daily Telegraph. "Now comes a report from Egypt that the Antiquities Department has discovered stone buildings, older than any yet known save the earliest Pyramids. "Those who have seen the sights of Cairo may remember that close by the statues and mounds which are all that now remains of the magnificence of Memphis stands a strange pyramid built in five stages and in other curious ways unlike the others. It is called the Step Pyramid, it is the oldest of all. It was built to be the tomb of King Zoser, who reigned in Memphis perhaps 4500 years before Christ. Close by the Step Pyramid Mr. Cecil Firth has discovered two Tomb Chapels. There are many tombs of the old empire there, and they have yielded much to the museum at Cairo. But the structures now brought to light belong to the same dynasty as the Step Pyramid, that is, they were built not less than 5,000, perhaps 7,000, years ago, and we are told that they will prove to be the oldest stone buildings in the world. "What is even more wonderful is that the architecture and the craftsmanship which they exhibit are of a very high order, pointing further back still to a long period of development. The style is not what we commonly think of as Egyptian, for the columns are fluted and have leaf form capitals. How long had the people in the Nile delta been building with stone before they learnt the mastery of the material which such work required? How many thousands of years must we allow as the period during which men have had the ability to use stone for their houses and their temples? "Long before that, he it remembered, men were building with brick. The earliest Egyptian dynasties have left signs of brickwork. Before the first brick was burnt in the sun in Egypt or on the Chaldean plain, man must have been making himself habitations for the ability to plan a brick-built hut implies some power of design, some knowledge of what a house should be. We do not know

how quick were the processes of civilization to throw a singular and novel light on the decay of ancient civilizations. It is said that in abandoning their rich and coarse country food for the more refined diet of the cities, the people in vitamins. Race-suicide and class suicide is due to this indiscriminate refinement of diet, as well as to deliberate methods of the urban population.

It is not many years since fears were expressed that the negroes of the United States might become a disproportionately large part of the population. This would certainly be alarming, as it seems to be now definitely shown that the bulk of them are educable. Now, however, it is announced that the negroes of the cities are decaying. Deaths of negroes in large towns are twice as numerous as births. Their death-rate, in fact, is twice that of the whites. The reason suggested by some scientists

is very interesting, as it tends to throw a singular and novel light on the decay of ancient civilizations. It is said that in abandoning their rich and coarse country food for the more refined diet of the cities, the people in vitamins. Race-suicide and class suicide is due to this indiscriminate refinement of diet, as well as to deliberate methods of the urban population.



Two coloured men were standing at the corner discussing family trees. "Yes, sub, man," said Ambrose, "can trace my relations back to a family tree." Chase 'em back to a family tree," said Rose. "New man, trace 'em, trace 'em, me!" Braided wool in sand, orange and black makes cunning cuts for beige frock.

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