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## Better a Peasant Than a Peer.

CHAPTER XXXV.  
A PRETTY PILOT.

"Afraid!" exclaims Hal, clasping her to him—"you afraid! You are the bravest girl in the world, and you will come. Yes, I know you will. Now, let me think. The day after to-morrow, darling; we must go to-morrow!"

"To-morrow!"

"Yes"—and he strokes the silken head—"to-morrow. Now, you must be brave, and do as I tell you. To-night—no, to-morrow morning—you must pack up a few things, what you want, only really what you want, just a little bundle; and then you must come out to this tree with it at—yes, at three o'clock. Let me see; what does the count do in the afternoon?"

Verona smiles.

"He goes to sleep."

Hal grins.

"Poor old man, quite right of him. I wish I could give him a sleeping draught for to-morrow. Well, when he is asleep, not before, you must come here; but sleep or not, you must not be later than four, not a minute, for we may have a long way to go. Anyhow, you'll find me waiting for you; the rest you can leave to me, darling."

Breathless, panting, she looks up at him.

"Papa!" is all she says.

"Well," he says, "will he be miserable because you are made happy?"

She hangs her head and smiles. Love is always clever at argument. Then she looks up suddenly.

"And suppose—suppose we are overtaken—ah!"

Hal's face darkens ominously, but brightens almost instantly.

"I don't think that's likely, darling," he says, and then he laughs, actually laughs. "You forget," he says, in answer to her look of surprise, "that I've seen your horses; and I was thinking that I'd give any pair of them twenty miles start of the day; and, if we manage properly, we ought to get twenty miles start of them."

All aflame with the prospect of action—it is suspense and inaction that overwhelms your Englishman—the boy's face is all aglow with hope, and love, and courage.

"Cheer up, darling," he says, just as a sailor might speak to his sweetheart; "trust to me, and I'll have you out of the count's clutches long before the day after to-morrow. You are not afraid now?"

"No," she says, and she puts her hands on his shoulders, and looks at him with a little quivering smile; "no, I'm not afraid now."

There is a moment's silence, in which the eyes, the hearts speak each to each; then she starts:

"Listen! There is the clock striking. Can we have been here an hour? Ah, how the time flies—flies! I must go, yes," with a long, wistful sigh; "I must go; they will miss me, and—ah! what is that?" and she springs to him, trembling.

It is a man's footstep, coming across the dry grass.

With a whisper of caution, Hal draws her close to the ground, just as a man's figure is seen amid the trees.

Hal's breath comes quickly, for he has recognized the man. It is the fellow who passed and repassed the stable door while he was talking with George.

Almost breathless, they crouch and watch. The man stands looking about him for some minutes—an eternity, it seems—then he goes off quietly, sneakily.

They wait for five minutes, until the man passes almost out of sight.

"Now," says Verona, "I will go."

"Go, then, darling," he says; "we part for the last time to-night. Verona," and he blushes as deeply as women do, "will you give me a kiss?" And she kisses him.

CHAPTER XXXVI.  
JOY WITH THE DAWNING.

Whether he treads on earth or sky, Hal scarcely knows. To see him one moment, one would think he had come into an immense fortune; the next, he thrusts his hand through his hair, as if he had suddenly been made chancellor of the exchequer; once or twice he stops and looks around cautiously, but no one is in sight, and soon he is near the castle and less cautious.

Before him lies an adventure, an undertaking, the like of which he has read about in novels, but has never met in real life. Quietly he pulls out his pipe and smokes away ardently.

"It oughtn't to be so difficult," he says to himself; "it's always easy enough—in books; but so I notice most things are. The running away I—and the boys—can manage easily enough; there's no difficulty about that; but when we've got to where we're running to—that's what bothers me! Oh, my darling—my darling! Yes, I spoke the simple truth when I said I'd rather see the count and her dead than he should have her!" and, with a flash of stern determination, he walks into the stable yard.

He takes his man, George, into his confidence, and together they complete the preparations for the elopement. The programme is carried out next day without a hitch, until the lovers reach Duffach.

That little village has been selected as a safe retreat because it is off the main roads and near enough to the castle to be thought an unlikely place for the runaways to stop.

Hal leaves the princess at a little inn, and goes to the village priest. The cure listens sympathetically to his story, but says he cannot marry Hal and Verona, as they are not of the same religion.

In despair the young man prepares to take the princess back to Forbach, but then he remembers Jeanne. He dispatches George with a note to his sister, begging her to come to him at once.

Meanwhile, at the King's Schloss, Lady Lucelle has guessed that Hal and Verona have eloped, but, for reasons of her own, keeps her knowledge to herself and, indeed, invents reasons for Hal's absence. She has, too, been devoting her time to persuading Clarence Lane that the marquis has ill-treated Jeanne, that Jeanne is unhappy, and that Clarence has a chance of winning her affection if he will fly with her.

Vane, conscious of Clarence's infatuation for Jeanne, and believing that she does not care for herself, decides, after a talk with Charlie Nugent, to carry her away to England. Charlie consents to act as host to the guests remaining at the Castle.

Greatly moved by Vane's confidence, Charlie does not hesitate, when he meets the love-mad viscount a few minutes later, to tell him to go on to Norway at once. Clarence agrees to leave that very night.

Lord Ferndale tells Jeanne that he wishes her to accompany him to England the following day. She hesitates a moment as she thinks of her brother and his trouble; then she accedes to her husband's wish.

(To be continued)



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"Don't think I'm interfering or trying to annoy you," he said again. "But if there is anything I can do to help you..."

She shook her head.

"There isn't anything. . . . I ought to have known better than to let you hear that I was crying. . . . There's nothing the matter, I—"

Then quite suddenly she broke down again into bitter sobbing. "Oh, I'm so miserable—so utterly miserable—I wish I were dead!"

Micky was appalled; he had heard women say that sort of thing before, and had said it himself scores of times, but never with that note of tragedy which he heard in this girl's voice.

Ten minutes ago he had considered himself the most miserable of mortals because he had been let down over a dinner; he was ashamed of his temper now as he stood there in the starlight and listened to this girl's sobbing.

"Look here," he said after a moment, "you'll never feel any better if you stay out here in the cold. I don't suppose you've had a respectable meal for hours either—I know what women are. Where do you live? You'll soon feel better when you get beside a fire and have something to eat."

"I'm not going home any more," she said.

She spoke quite quietly, but with a sort of despair which there was no mistaking.

Micky was a rapid thinker. He had clean forgotten his headache. This was adventure with a capital letter. There was still something of romance in the world which his faded palate had not yet tasted.

"I'm sure you're tired," he said gently, "and probably fed-up. So am I. I was just wondering what I heard you crying. It made me feel a sort of kinship with you—it did, upon my word. If I'd been a woman I dare say I should have been howling like anything. Will you come along with me and let me give you some supper? I'm hungry too."

She shrank back from him with a little gesture of fear.

"Oh no—please let me go! . . ."

She tried to pass him, but Micky barred the way.

"You can't walk about the streets all night," he said determinedly. "The cat will hate it anyway, even if you don't mind." There was a hint of laughter in his voice, though he had never felt more serious in all his life. "And if you don't want me to take pity on you, you might at least take pity on me. . . . please don't think I'm a bouncer trying to annoy you or anything like that. . . . perhaps I want a friend just as badly as you do. . . ." He stopped, agast at his own temerity.

"If you do," she said tremulously, "I am more sorry for you than I can say."

"I'm glad you said that," Micky answered, "because now you'll come along and have that supper with me. There's a little cafe quite near here that I know. If we are both miserable we can at least be miserable together."

Something told him that this girl was at the end of her tether; that she was desperate, and his first casual curiosity concerning her deepened in the most surprising fashion.

He felt in some inexplicable way that a curtain had been lifted from a phase of life hitherto hidden from him; as if he were standing on the threshold of a new world, where women only weep for something real and tragic, not just butterfly tears of petulance like the women of his own class.

The girl was silent for a moment; then suddenly she laughed, a hard little laugh of recklessness.

(To be continued)



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## THE Phantom Lover.

(By the Author of "A Bachelor Husband.")

CHAPTER I.

"Nothing!" There was a note of exasperation in his voice. "You were crying—I heard you, and people don't walk about the streets at this time of night and cry if there's nothing the matter. If that's a baby you've got with you, you ought to know better than to—" He broke off. She was laughing, a weak, uncertain little laugh.

"A baby?" she said tremulously. "It isn't a baby; it's a cat."

"A cat!" Micky's voice was full of disgust. He looked down at her from his superior height with sudden suspicion. If this was just a hoax?

"Well, what's the matter anyway?" he asked again.

She looked away from him without answering.

Micky began to feel a bit of a fool; he wished he had not yielded to the impulse to follow her. After all, it was no business of his if a stranger chose to walk about this road and weep; he looked at her impatiently.

Her hair beneath its not very smart hat shone golden in the lamplight, and the little oval of cheek and rounded chin which was all he could see of her averted face somehow touched a forgotten chord in his heart and made him think of his boyhood and the girl-mother who had not lived long enough to be more than a mem-

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A friend of mine. with two children, w me to live in a city. About a wee and a letter from he umax of several, v of unhappiness and ery about her hu the children's health and so forth, that r could stand it any ed to get her wor could leave, too had been saving for see her daughter She promised to do tter things and I was saying that eve

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