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The Old Marquis

The Girl of the Cloisters

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MAGIC OF TWO SYLLABLES.

"Nothing—nothing, dear! In Germany! But you will not go; surely you will not go?"

"Why not? Why should we not?" he asked, blinking at her wonderingly. "It is a splendid offer. I had it two days ago, but—I'm very sorry, dear—I forgot to mention it! We must go at once if I take it, and, of course, I must take it."

"At once—?" She looked at the door as if she must fly after Edgar and tell him. "But—when do you mean?" "In a week's time," he said, calmly, as if no change that life could offer him could arouse or excite him.

Lela drew a long breath of relief; she even coughed as the strain relaxed. "Next week! My dear, I thought you meant to-morrow! Next week! Oh, there is time enough. You won't accept for a day or two, grandpapa?" "I've written to-night," he said, slowly.

"Give me the letter," she said, knowing well that if she did not secure it he would in an absent fit be sure to post it.

He hunted, and ultimately found the letter, and, with a feeling of security, she thrust it in her pocket.

"We'll talk about it the day after to-morrow, dear," she said.

The day after to-morrow! She repeated the words as she stood before her glass, stoed gazing at the reflection of her flushed face and beaming eyes, and asked herself what he could see in her to love her so dearly! The day after to-morrow and she would be—his wife!

Oh, blissful words! They rung with sweet music through her dreams—rang to the tune of marriage bells!

CHAPTER XXVI.
MEDITATING A CRIME.

IN the midst of his joy one thought alone worried Lord Edgar as he strode along the Kingston Road toward London, and that was the reflection that he should have to keep his marriage secret from his father. He would have liked to have gone to him—after the ceremony—and have

And the Worst is Yet to Come—



said: "I am married to the girl, the poor, innocent girl, whose mind you tried to poison, whose soul you tortured, and I am prepared to abide by your threat. From this moment I will not accept a penny from you."

This is what he would have liked to have done; but he could not. Man can not live on love alone; even lovers, alas! must eat and drink; and Lord Edgar had no money of his own. He had a liberal allowance—a magnificent one, the lawyer who paid it once ventured to remark—but Lord Edgar lived up to it. Although he lived in the Albany and lived quietly, very quietly of late, he kept some horses, played high when he did play—no man cared less for it than he did, and he cared not a rap whether he won or lost, and always backed his own horses. Now, as you know, he had refused to "hedge," as it is called, on the unfortunate Flyaway, and he had to pay pretty heavily for being honest. These losses had swallowed up his last allowance, but a great sum awaited him at the lawyer's, and—well, he must have it.

Clifford Revel, to whom he had spoken his mind, and who had silently sneered at his cousin's fine sense of honor, had argued that as the marquis had deceived and plotted against Lord Edgar, Lord Edgar had every right to plot and circumvent the marquis. But Lord Edgar could not see it in that light, and determined that in some way or other he would manage to become independent of his father, and inform him he was married.

Another man might have been tempted to wish his father dead, but such a wish never entered Lord Edgar's head or heart.

The marquis was welcome to the title and wealth of Farintosh for all he, Lord Edgar, cared. In simple truth, he would rather have been a clerk at a hundred and fifty a year than Lord Fane!

He caught the last train from Kingston and reached London tired, but ecstatically happy. One more day and Lela would be his! With this reflection he fell fast asleep and slept like a child, or rather like a healthy, young athlete, until Lela's splashing with the bath-water awoke him.

There was a great deal to be done, and he ate his breakfast striding about the room—which is not good for the digestion, by the way—then he got

into his dog-cart and drove down to Clifford Revel's in time to find that gentleman at breakfast, which he was taking not while walking up and down the room—oh, no!—but seated comfortably, as if he had not a sin upon his soul or a black thought in his head.

"She consents!" said Lord Edgar, clapping him on the shoulder and beaming down at him. "You were right, Clifford. I was able to convince her. It was hard work, but I convinced her!"

"Ah! hard was it?" said Clifford. "Strange young lady! Not many would need much convincing that it would be a nice thing to be the future Marchioness of Farintosh."

Lord Edgar flushed.

"As to that," he said, quietly, "I'll stake my life that she never thought of it! You don't know her, Cliff! No; the thought never entered her head! Oh, Lord, what a fearful amount of importance you attach to that sort of thing! As if one were happier as the Marquis of Farintosh than a simple mister! Look at my father! Is there a more miserable being than he is? But we don't want to talk of that!"

"No, no!" smiled Clifford, sipping his coffee. "The great event's the whole thing whereby we catch the conscience of this—lover! And you are to be married to-morrow!" and he looked up at him with a gleam of sardonic amusement in his keen eyes.

"Yes, with your good help, gentle cousin!" laughed Lord Edgar, walking up and down; it seemed as if he could not keep still.

"My help! Yes, you shall' have that! Haven't I pledged my reputation on the successful issue of the business? And have you made all arrangements where to meet Miss Temple?"

"Yes," said Lord Edgar. "I meet her at nine o'clock to-morrow in the churchyard. We shall catch the half-past nine train and be in London—!" He stopped suddenly. "By the way, at what church are we to be married? Which do you think best?"

Clifford Revel's eyelids drooped, and he shook his head gravely.

"My dear fellow, what a question! Church! Why, of course, you must not be married in a church!"

"Why, where on earth else?" demanded Lord Edgar.

Clifford Revel smiled.

"At your rooms, my dear fellow, of course!"

"At my rooms?" echoed Lord Edgar, staring at him.

"Exactly—didn't I tell you—explain yesterday?"

"No"—curtly.

"But I think I did. You lovers are so wild and absent-minded that you forget!"

"I haven't forgotten—you did not tell me," said Lord Edgar, promptly.

"Well, I meant to," said Clifford, easily. "Of course, you can't be married at church! Why, my dear fellow, you want this affair to be kept quiet—for a time, at least. And do you think it could be kept quiet for a day if you were married in a church? Why, man alive, the parson, the clerk, the pew-opener would know who it was that was being spliced, and one and all would talk about it, and it would be all over London before you had time to reach home! What a modest, simple-minded man you are! You, Viscount Fane, can't be married like a mere nobody! Your marriage is an event; an event upon which a hundred marriageable young ladies and their mammae are speculating!—When such is your marry, the newspapers seize upon the fact and

chronicle it in paragraphs from one inch to a foot long! No, if you want to be married quietly, it must not take place in church. The ceremony must take place in your rooms, of course."

"At my rooms!" said Lord Edgar, gravely. "Will that be legal?"

Clifford Revel was not quite sure, but he answered without the least hesitation:

"Of course. You can be married anywhere with a special license, and that is what you and I are going to get."

His tone of assurance convinced Lord Edgar; he had no reason to be suspicious that he knew of.

"Well," he said, "I care little where it takes place so that it makes Lela my wife. I wish, for her sake, that it could have been an ordinary kind of wedding. I believe that most women attach importance to the white satin dress and the bride-maids and the cake and all that, and she is womanly, every inch of her, bless her!"

"But she must forego these delights," said Clifford Revel. "After all, what girl would not be willing to do so to become Lady Fane? But I am not to enunciate worldly sentiments in connection with Miss Temple. Pardon. And now we'll go and get the license. I have promised to stand by you till the end, and I will."

"You are a good fellow, and I am heartily obliged to you," said Lord Edgar, laying his hand on Clifford's shoulder, "and so she will be! I shall be glad when you see her, Cliff! I have told you how lovely she is, how sweet and gentle, and how perfect a lady she is; but I think you will be surprised."

"No doubt," said Clifford Revel, with a smile. "I hope to be. At any rate, she must have some great charm to have captured you."

"She has," assented Lord Edgar. "I don't mean to say that she is as queenly as Miss Drayton—"

Clifford Revel looked up at him.

"By the way," he said; "of all persons, Miss Drayton must know nothing of this affair—until it is over. Remember that. For her to know is for all London to be cognizant!"

Lord Edgar smiled, but looked doubtful.

"Do you think so? I think you misjudge her. I know no one in whom I would sooner confide than Miss Drayton."

"Think what you like, but don't tell her if you chance to see her," said Clifford Revel.

Then he got up and put on his morning coat, and they went out and drove in Lord Edgar's dog-cart to Doctors' Commons and got the license.

"Wonderful piece of paper!" exclaimed Lord Edgar, as he looked at it and put it in his pocket. "It will make me the happiest man in the world. By the way, Clifford, about the clergyman?"

"That is all right," said Clifford Revel. "I have got a friend, a young curate, who will perform the ceremony. I'll go and hunt him up."

"What is his name?" asked Lord Edgar, whose interest was keen in every particular of the event.

"Browne, with the 'e,'" said Clifford Revel, glibly. "Don't worry yourself about the details, my dear fellow. Leave it all to me. I'll see you through it, as I have promised. And now I must go to my office; and you?"

"Oh, I've got lots to do!" said Lord Edgar, cheerfully.

"Then we will say eleven o'clock to-morrow at your rooms," said Clifford, and with that, they parted.

(To be Continued.)

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PARIS, May 26. The French Government has received from the German peace delegates the assurance that it will ask for no further extension of time for consideration of the peace terms. The extension granted last week expires Thursday.

PARIS, May 26. The Supreme Economic Council announced to-day that the Allied and Associated Governments had decided to lift the blockade of Hungary as soon as stable government is established there.

LONDON, May 26. Thousands of discharged soldiers and sailors, out of employment, armed with stones and other missiles, marched towards the House of Commons to-day. They came into conflict with the police barring the approaches, however, and were scattered. Later the procession was reformed and marched toward Buckingham Palace, but the demonstration broke up before it reached the Palace. There were no further disorders.

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