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THE HEIR OF Lancewood

CHAPTER XXV.

"It is not often," he said, "that a mother is so completely blind to her child's interests; it must be that Lady Neslie keeps him ignorant on purpose that she may have the more influence over him. A good tutor would in some degree remedy the evil, if one could be found who would take a true interest in the child's welfare."

Vivien's noble face brightened as she looked at him.

"You have anticipated what I came to say," she said, with a gracious smile. "I dare not engage a tutor for the boy; if I did, Lady Neslie would discharge him at once on her return. But, if you, Mr. Dorman, would take him a few hours every day, we might do something with him."

"You can ask me nothing, Miss Neslie, that I would not do for you," returned the secretary; "if you think I could do the boy any good, I will devote myself to him."

"But your own work, Mr. Dorman—how will you manage that?"

"I will do it at night," he replied. "Do not refuse me, Miss Neslie. I speak truly when I say that I would lay down my life to serve you. Permit me then to offer you a few hours of my time each day."

"I should be more pleased than I can say if you would devote those hours to little Oswald. You, as well as myself, have the true interests of Lancewood at heart. We can do nothing with Lady Neslie; but we might, between us, do much for the boy—we could take him out of the hands of servants. You might have him so many hours each day, and so could I—and then surely we might do him some good."

His face glowed with rapture too great for words; that she should associate him with herself—that she should appeal to him—rely upon him—filled his heart with passionate, rapturous delight.

To please her he would have devoted every waking moment of his life to the boy. He began his task at once. He bought the prettiest and most amusing books he could select, to make learning to read pleasant to him. He worked with zeal and will and fervor, content, if, during the course of the lessons, Vivien came in and rewarded him with a smile.

One morning, when she stood before them with her sweet, grave, luminous smile on her face, the boy cried out suddenly—

"I say, Vivien, you do not look wicked, you know."

"Who says I am wicked, Oswald?" she asked.

"Mamma told me so. She said you

hated me because I had taken Lancewood from you. To hate is wicked—so if you hate me you must be wicked."

"I do not hate you," she replied, gently. "I pray to Heaven to make you a good man."

CHAPTER XXVI.

The month of Valerie's absence was the most peaceful Vivien had known since her father's marriage. It seemed to her that all her old friends took the opportunity of calling at Lancewood—people who had not kept up any great intimacy since the marriage—people who, understanding the difficulties of Miss Neslie's position, admired the brave, patient, resigned spirit in which she met them.

To Gerald Dorman it was a golden interval. Every hour and day was marked in golden letters on the tablets of his memory. The plan which she herself had arranged for keeping the child almost continually with them, brought them into hourly contact. Mr. Dorman had his own rooms in the western wing of the Abbey, but to give Oswald his lessons he used the library. When Vivien knew the child was busy with his lessons, she would go to see what progress he had made. Then when he was sent to his nurses, she would consult anxiously with Gerald as to whether he thought there was any improvement. Gerald was not over sanguine.

"It would be a work of years to effect any real good. I have studied the child well—he might by stern discipline develop into a good man, but he never will be one without it."

How Gerald Dorman valued these hours only he himself knew. He saw more of Miss Neslie now than he ever had seen before. Her wonderful beauty, her proud grace, her striking talent, the womanly tenderness that seemed to struggle with her innate pride, all enchanted him.

"I do not think I could love her more," he would say to himself at times, yet each day his love increased.

The hours he passed in her presence were to him hours of bliss. To his intense and passionate delight he found that she was learning to rely upon him, that she turned to him in her difficulties, that she sought his advice and followed it.

This state of things was so delightful to him that he was careful not to disturb it. He guarded his every look, word, action. Of his devotion to her and her interests he spoke most fully—of his passionate love, never. With one word of that he knew that their pleasant friendly intercourse would end at once. Vivien received his devotion with calm, serene grace. It seemed right and natural to her that the man whom her father had liked and trusted should be devoted to her. Had she dreamed that he loved her, she would have equal anger and surprise.

The happy interval was drawing to a close at last. At the end of Feb-

ruary Valerie and her maid were to return. It was well for Miladi that she did not hear the comments of the servants; they all wished she would remain where she was. During her absence there were peace, content, order, method, kind, firm rule and regularity—all things that Miladi herself disliked. Her return was looked forward to with dread—by the nurses especially. There was a marked improvement in the boy; but, as they said, it would all disappear when her ladyship returned.

On the day she expected her Vivien walked slowly up and down the broad path in the garden. Purple and golden crocuses were springing, snow drops raised their meek heads, violets perfumed the cold clear air, there was a faint thrill of new life in the tall trees.

"My beautiful home," said the girl, with proud, passionate love—"Heaven grant that no evil may befall it, no wrong-doing dishonor these ancient walls!"

Her heart grew warm within her as she looked round; it was something to be the upholder of the honor of her race; all her hopes, her prayers, her aspirations were fixed on the boy who was to inherit the Abbey. Some good had been done by patience and forbearance; more might yet be done. She saw Gerald Dorman crossing the lawn, and she went to him.

"Will you walk a few steps with me?" she said. "I want to talk to you."

Under the clear, cold, blue sky they walked together where crocuses grew and Vivien, turning to him, held out her hand.

"I wish to thank you," she said, "for all that you have done for me; you have been patient and hopeful; in my father's name and my own, I thank you."

It was almost the first time that her beautiful white hand had touched his; the noble face had a clear light in it, the dark eyes looked with grateful earnestness into his.

"If we can persevere," she said, "and try to train the boy well, he may make a good master for Lancewood; we can render no greater service to the Neslies than that."

"I know it," acknowledged Gerald. "The task has been easy, so far," she said; "but when Lady Neslie returns, it will be more difficult. I meant to ask you if you will be patient and persevere in spite of all difficulties, in spite even of rudeness and insult—will you persevere, for my sake, for my father's sake, for the honor of the Neslies?"

"I promise," replied Gerald. "Thank you," she said simply; "you are a faithful friend." And those few words more than repaid him for all that he had done.

It was in the gray light of a February afternoon that Valerie returned. She looked worn and slightly haggard, as though she had known but little rest either by night or by day. When she entered the house she seemed to bring confusion and disorder with her.

"Well, Vivien," was her greeting to Miss Neslie, "have you enjoyed your month's rest? You are hardly pleased to see me, I suppose? You are looking very well. I am dreadfully tired; there is no time for rest in the whirl of Paris."

Vivien was struck by an indefinable something about her, she could hardly tell what. Lady Neslie seemed to have deteriorated—she had the air and manner of one who has been in common society, and a tinge of vulgarity particularly noticeable when she was off her guard.

"And how is the boy?" she asked quickly—"my little Sir Oswald?"

Vivien answered kindly. "I have brought him all kinds of presents," said Lady Neslie, "but I have not brought anything for you, Vivien; I did not know what to buy—you have everything."

"Yes," she replied, cheerfully, "I have everything that I want." She felt pleased that Valerie had thought of her.

She was present when Valerie and her son met. Miladi's quick eyes seemed to read him.

"He looks well," she said. "Have you missed me much, Oswald?"

"Yes," he answered. "But, mamma," he continued, pointing to Vivien, "she is not wicked—she does not want Lancewood; she says she hopes

I shall have it if I am a good man."

"You are a good boy," said Valerie. The child shook his head.

"No, I am not. I know the difference now between good and bad. She is good"—he nodded at Vivien—"and so is Mr. Dorman; but I am not, and, mamma," he added, fearlessly, "I do not think you are."

Lady Neslie was not angry; she merely laughed.

"Why am I not good?" she asked. "You never say your prayers, and you laugh at things."

"My dear child, to complete all, you should have your hair cut close, and a broad-brimmed hat; you are quite a Puritan."

"I say prayers," he continued, with an air of patronage; "and I do not tell lies—Mr. Dorman says they are cowardly."

"You do not seem inclined to hide your light under a bushel," said Miladi, with another laugh. "You have been learning at a fine rate."

Vivien almost trembled for the result, but Lady Neslie seemed more amused than anything else.

She had been at home two or three days before she found out about the lessons, and during that time they noticed a great difference in her. She was restless, uneasy, having always an air of subdued excitement. She held long conferences with her maid; she fell into long, deep reveries. She had a fashion of walking from one room to another, of taking up books and putting them down, of going to the piano and leaving it, of sitting with knitted brows, as though trying to solve a problem. Evidently there was some new interest excited within her. Vivien wondered much what it was.

On the fourth day after her return, one of her restless fits led her to the library, and there she found the boy with a flushed face bending over a book. Mr. Dorman was seated at the table with him, and Vivien, evidently greatly interested, was watching them.

"Try again," Mr. Dorman was saying, as Miladi entered—"try again. You will learn it perfectly next time."

Lady Valerie entered quietly. "What a domestic scene!" she said. "Pray, Mr. Dorman, what are you doing with Sir Oswald?"

"I am trying to teach him to read and to spell, Lady Neslie," he replied. "You are making him very ill," she said. "See how flushed his face is! He will have brain disease—brain fever. Put that book down, Oswald."

Gerald remembered his promise about patience, perseverance and endurance. He looked at Vivien's noble beautiful face before he replied, and the sight of it seemed to encourage him.

"I assure you, Lady Neslie," he said, "that I am very careful of him. He has no headache; his face is only flushed with his eagerness to master his lesson."

But Lady Neslie did not look well pleased.

"I do not see why the boy need be troubled with so much learning," she said. "He will be master of Lancewood; he need not study like one who has to work for a living."

"The fact that he will hold so high a position," observed Mr. Dorman, "explains of itself the need for high education."

"And pray," inquired Lady Neslie, recovering her good humor, "who made you my son's tutor, Mr. Dorman?"

Vivien had purposely refrained from speaking, knowing that if she did the matter would probably assume an unpleasant aspect.

"Who made you my son's tutor?" Lady Neslie repeated. He answered:

"I found that I had some little time—spare time—on my hands, Lady Neslie. I thought—pray pardon me if I am wrong—I could not better serve your interest than by devoting them to the child."

"Perhaps not," said Miladi, carelessly. "Do you think it would be advisable for the boy to have a tutor?"

(To be Continued.)

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Measured by every possible standard, viewed in the light of all information from all sides, the second German offensive represents, second, conceivably the final, but the Kaiser's hosts for a decision favorable decision in the war, certainly not since that time, six months ago, when the great drive the Marne began, has there been such momentous crisis as is now hand.

By this time the world is well familiar with the German strategy August, 1914. France was to be moved from the Allied battle line one swift terrible, final blow would destroy the military power the Third Republic and leave many free to deal with Russia.

But France was not destroyed. The blow was passed, and in the meantime Russian hosts poured into the front, and the disaster that seemed threaten France in August in small degree overtook Austria September. The grand scheme German high command was thwarted. There was left the necessity to turn east with the west work unfinished and rescue Austria.

Now, over weeks and months, German effort to save Austria, pushed with varying success. On whole, until May 1, with small success, in field, and shining success back of the line, in the reorganization and re-officing of the Hapsburg forces. Until Austrian armies were organized new German forces put in the field, the campaign, after one desperate effort culminating at Lodz, to the level of local operations.

But we know now that behind the local operations there was the idea of ending a war on both fronts by the complete destruction of the foe on one front. France, German high command conceded, could not be disposed of—there was left Russia. Russia could be disposed of the was time to win the war.

Little by little then German plan were made. Russia continued to advance, but Russian ammunition grew less and less. The ice blockade of the German blockade interrupted the inflow of supplies. At the last moment, before the spring came at Archangel and Vladivostok were ordered, Germany planned to strike.

Her blow was tremendous, instantly successful, continued from May to the end of June, and culminated in the swift reconquest of Galicia, the repulse of Russia to her own territory, the capture of hundreds of the sands of prisoners, the most brilliant success of the war.

But there was one limitation to success. Russian military power was shaken, as was the French in August but it was not broken. Defeated, the Russian army escaped envelopment along the San and the Dnieper, and to this extent the great campaign failed. The failure was complete in this sense. For armies, not positions must be the objective, their destruction, the test of success in the present war.

German high command had, however, envisaged this failure. It had hoped to envelop the Russian army in Galicia between the army of Mackensen coming east from Cracow and the Austrian troops coming north over the Carpathians and west from Bukovina. Now it fell back upon a far more grandiose scheme, involving an enormous extent of territory requiring troops in numbers unknown in other wars.

Look at the map of Russia-Poland and it will be seen that it is pushed into Austro-German territory like a fist driven against a pillow. To us another figure, it is like a nut held within a cracker, one jaw of which is East Prussia, the other Galicia. And in the military sense Hindenburg is the upper, Mackensen the lower jaw.

To-day the whole of the gigantic

