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## WHEN LOVE Came Too Late.

### CHAPTER XX.

"I should like to meet him," said the bishop, amiably. "I very seldom forget a face, and his seems familiar to me."

"If you'll come with me to his cottage, I'll ask him to dine with us to-night. He is a most charming companion," said the squire, eagerly.

The bishop inclined his head, and the two men walked toward The Dell. As they did so they saw Faradeane in the garden, pacing up and down the gravel walk, and the squire stopped at the gate, and called to him.

Faradeane walked toward them, but at sight of the bishop stopped suddenly. It was only for a moment, however, and he came and unlocked the gate.

"Good-afternoon," said the squire. "Let me introduce you to the Bishop of Latham, Faradeane."

Faradeane raised his hat, and the bishop followed suit, and smiled.

"We have met before, Mr. Faradeane, have we not?" he said, pleasantly.

Faradeane looked him straight in the face.

"Your lordship mistakes me for a better man, I hope," he said, with a smile.

The bishop bowed with ready courtesy and self-possession.

"It is not so, then. 'Pray forgive me.'"

"Dine with us to-night, will you, Faradeane?" said the squire, with affectionate familiarity.

Faradeane hesitated a moment, then shook his head.

"Not to-night," he said.

The squire knew him too well to dream of pressing him; and the bishop, having exchanged a few words with him, and the squire turned homeward.

Half an hour later Bartley Bradstone left The Maples to walk to the Grange. Most men are nervous and restless on the day before their marriage, but Mr. Bartley Bradstone was nervous and restless to a remarkable degree. He had wandered about his huge house all day, bullying the workmen and the servants, and it was not until his brougham had been brought to the door that he had suddenly decided that it would do him good to walk instead of ride to the Grange.

He had got himself dressed in his evening suit with even more than his usual care, as his badgered valet,

driven almost to distraction, could testify, and he lit up a cigar at starting to steady his nerves. He had also drunk a full glass of brandy-and-water for the same reason.

There was a short cut through the wood—the same wood in which Faradeane had pleaded for Bertie—and, the moon lighting up every inch of the way, Mr. Bartley Bradstone decided to go through the wood.

Many another man would have been struck by the beauty of the scene, the soft light throwing the shadow of every leaf upon the ground in a delicate tracery, and silvering every branch of the grand old oaks which had been the pride of generations of Vanleys; but Mr. Bartley Bradstone was too fully occupied with thoughts of to-morrow to bestow any attention upon scenery.

"Only a few hours more," he muttered, "only a few hours! I'm a plucky devil, and I deserve to win; and I will, too! She's plucky, too. Lord! it's wonderful what a girl will do to save her father. How beautiful she is, and how proud! But I'll cure her of that, I rather think. I'll let her know who's master, once I've got her safe and tight. I'll have no more of that fellow Faradeane, for one thing. She thinks a great deal too much of him—a great deal. If he fancies he is going to hang about her skirts after she's my wife, as he's been doing lately, he'll find his mistake out. That Faradeane's a beast, and I hate him."

He repeated this charming sentiment twice, and with such energy that he let his cigar go out.

Flinging it away, he took out his case, and, after selecting another, lit a match. As he did so he heard a rustling among the undergrowth, but, thinking it was a chance rabbit, took very little notice; but suddenly, as the match was falling from his fingers, the figure of a woman slipped out from among the shadows and stood right in his path.

He stepped back with a start of surprise, and stared at her; and she, with a quick movement, flung the shawl she was wearing from before her face and laughed.

It was only a woman's laugh, but it made Bartley Bradstone shrink back trembling and shaking like a leaf; the cigar fell from his fingers, and he stood—or, rather, leaned—against a tree like a man who is suddenly confronted with a ghost.

The woman, planting her feet firmly on the path, stared at him for a moment in silence, then burst into another loud, mirthless laugh.

"Why, it's you!" she exclaimed, and her laugh rang through the wood. "You! Well, this beats anything! You of all men!" and she struck her hands on her hips and laughed again.

Bartley Bradstone's tongue seemed to cling to the roof of his mouth, and his face, ashen pale, was distorted like a man's in mortal agony.

"Bella!" he said at last.

"Yes, that's me," retorted the woman. "Oh, I'm no ghost, though you look as if you thought I was! Great goodness, fancy meeting you—and here! Well, wonders will never cease. You! Why, I thought you were thousands of miles away, and you ain't. By Heaven, I'm in luck! Come, man, pull yourself together; I'm not a ghost, I tell you, not me! Don't pretend you forget Bella. How are you, Mr. Bradstone?" and with a mocking smile she held out her hand.

### CHAPTER XXI.

#### The Avenger.

Great drops of cold sweat stood upon Bartley Bradstone's forehead as he looked at the handsome, devil-may-

## Oh, How I Itched!

What long nerve-racking days of constant torture—what sleepless nights of terrible agony—itch-itch-itch—CONSTANT ITCH, until it seemed that I must TEAR OFF MY VERY SKIN—then—

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care face of the woman who, with her arms akimbo, stood regarding him with a mixture of amusement and contempt, combined with an enjoyment of his discomfiture which was almost tigerish.

At last he managed to find his voice, a very weak and feeble one. "This—this is a surprise, Bella," he said, forcing a sickly smile.

"Yes, I suppose it is," she retorted. "A pleasant surprise, of course."

What's become of the elegant manners you used to sport so freely? Any one would think I was an ogre instead of 'handsome Bella.' You see I have not forgotten some of your compliments. Yes, it is a surprise for both of us. I thought you were across the sea. That was a clever idea of yours, sending the money every quarter from France. It took me in, did it, indeed! I suppose you thought I should run after you, didn't you? Run after you!" and she laughed with scorn.

"What are you doing down here? Give an account of yourself, Bartley? Have you got such a thing as a cigarette about you? The smell of that cigar has set me off longing for a puff."

He handed her his silver case, and she smiled as she saw how his hand shook.

"Here, light it," she said, with a nonchalant air of command. He lit the cigarette, and handed it to her.

"Now, then," she said, blowing the smoke through her handsome nostrils. "Let's have a true and particular account of yourself."

"I'm—I'm staying here for a time," he said, trying to speak in a careless, matter-of-fact tone. "I—I haven't been quite the thing—France didn't suit me—and I ran down here for a change. I'm going back almost directly."

She looked at him with charming incredulity.

"I don't believe a word of it," she said, flicking the ash from her cigarette, and leaning against a tree in an easy attitude, as if she were leaning against the ropes of her trapeze. "I don't believe you've been out of England at all; and what's more, I don't care. You may go where you like, and do what you like, for what I care, Bartley."

He drew a breath of relief, and the color came slowly back to his face.

"Then—then you didn't come down here after me?" he said, with a pitiful attempt at a laugh.

"I certainly did not," she retorted, with unaffected scorn. "I came down here"—and her eyes twinkled—"because the air of London didn't agree with me, and I thought I'd take a change. Come down after you! Why, man, what do I want with you while you pay me my allowance regularly?"

"I thought—" he began.

"You flattered yourself too much," she broke in. "And you don't ask what I've been doing?" with a smile.

"I—I hope you've been enjoying yourself," he said, conciliatingly.

"A lot you care! As it happens, I have been enjoying myself. I've made a hit, and I'm one of the great London favorites, Bartley. What do you think of that, eh? Did you ever hear of Bella-Bella?"

He shook his head.

"Not you! You've been away from England so long, don't you know!" and she laughed sarcastically. "Well, I'm Bella-Bella, the Flying Swallow. There isn't one to touch me on the trapeze, they say; and I believe they're right. I'm making quite a pile, I am; but I'll take my allowance all the same. Thank you, Mr. Bradstone! Lord,

how frightened you look still!" and she stared and laughed at him. "I dare say you wish I was dead."

He started, and glanced at her under his brows.

"I'm sure I've wished the same many and many a time. But I'm still alive, you see, and kicking," and she folded her legs and stuck out her ankles. "Very much alive. I fancy I shall outlive you, my dear, though I do risk my neck every night. Drop in at the Palace of Amusement when you're in London next, and have a look at me."

"I—I will," he said.

"And so you're staying in this dead-and-alive hole, are you?" she said, eying him curiously. "I wonder what you're up to; some sly game or other, I'll be bound. You always were up to a lay of some kind, weren't you? What is it now, eh?"

"I don't understand you," he said, with affected carelessness. "I'm just staying on here—"

"Do you know many of the people of the place?" she asked, interrupting him contemptuously.

"A few, yes," he replied.

"Tell me their names—the swells, I mean."

"What do you want to know for?" he asked.

She stared at him.

"What's that to you?"

He bit his lip.

"You are no more civil than you used to be, Bella," he said, meekly.

She laughed.

"No; I was never very civil to you, was I? I knew how to treat you, don't you know. You're the sort that must be beaten like a spaniel—you are, Mr. Bradstone. But answer my question, will you? Who are the swells in this forsaken hole?"

He pretended to consider for a moment.

"There is Lord Garfield, and a baronet named Penstone, and Lord Granville—"

"The Cherub! I've heard of him, and seen him," and she nodded. "He's almost too good to be a swell. Well, who else?"

"There's the squire here—Mr. Vanley—and that's all."

"That's all, is it?" she added, reflecting. "Oh!" She was silent for a moment, as if pondering over the names, then she looked up. "And I suppose you are a swell, too, eh?"

"You're cutting a dash down here with your money, ain't you? It's like you, you always liked to be thought a gentleman, didn't you?" and she laughed.

The color flushed his face, then left it pale again.

"I wonder what your game is," she said, after a moment or two. "But I don't care. I shan't interfere. Where are you staying? At the inn where I've put up? You may as well come and have some supper with me. We can have a chat over old times," and she showed her white teeth in a grin.

"I'm—I'm staying with a friend here," he said; "and I'm going there now."

He pulled out his watch.

She stretched out her hand and took it as calmly as if it had belonged to her.

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