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CHAPTER XVIII.

The night of Gaunt's dinner-party arrived.

He had put it off as long as possible, for he hated the thought of it, but the thing had to be done, and at last a date was fixed and the invitations sent out. It was to be a very large party, but there was no danger of the resources of the Hall being strained; for the "state" rooms, as the housekeeper loved to call them, were vast enough to hold more persons than were asked, and the army of servants was well

There was a Countess of Roborough, a dear old lady, with white hair, and beautiful, old-fashioned manners; she was a great friend of Gaunt's, and she offered to play the part of hostess and | sit at the head of his table, "for that herself would not be noticed in that night only."

"It is a pity that there is not a duly qualified and legal 'lady of the castle,' " she said to Caunt when she made the slightly open at the neck, and without offer. "It is always awkward for a bachelor, and I think you will find me smiled at her reflection in the glass. useful. I hope, next time you give a

compassionate old eyes, and Gaunt shall escape notice all the easier."

ould always be satisfied to see you

in it. I am very grateful." She looked at him wistfully, and sighed; she knew that there must be would keep it to himself.

Mrs. Sherborne and her brother received an invitation, and accepted; men standing in waiting. Decima also received hers. She would Gaunt had made her promise, and she knew she must go. But she did not want to go with Mrs. Sherborne, and she carried the invitation to her father. Mr. Deane positively refused.

For Chilblains Chapped Skin

MENTHOLATUM Mentholatum



"I hate a crowd," he said. "Why does

"Bobby can not leave London." said

Mr. Deane shuffled up and down the "I've had a letter this morning from

him." he said, and he felt in his pockets and looked round helplessly. "Where is it? I put it somewhere. He writes asking for more money; he seems to have spent all his allowance already. I suppose I must send him some more, though I can't afford it; that is, just now; presently it will not matter." He straightened himself, and looked round with a sanguine smile. "There will be plenty of money, my dear Decima, plenty, very soon. Yes, Bobby and you shall take your proper places in the

world." Decima had grown so accustomed to such remarks as these that they had ceased to make any impression on her "And you will go, father?" she said. "Yes-yes; I suppose so," he as-

sented, with a sigh. Decima went and looked at her dresses. She would have liked a new frock for the occasion, but she thought of Bobby's letter, and resolved to make one of the old ones do. She was quite sure that so insignificant a person as

brilliant assemblage So, when the night came, she pu on her soft, dove-colored silk, only a flower or jewel for ornament, and

"I certainly do look rather Quaker party, I shall not be needed, Lord ish, as Bobby would say," she thought "But it will not matter. I know scarce-She smiled at him with her wise and ly any one but the Mershons, and

smiled back at her, and shook his The party had created a great deal of excitement, and she realized how He had winced at the word "bache- important a function it was when she lor," but he answered, calmly enough: saw the large crowd of villagers which "No one could fill the place so well had collected at the gate to see the ous metals and the flashing of the as you, dear Lady Roborough, and I guests arrive, and the long line of jewels. The dinner was a superb one

along the avenue. The great house was a blaze light, and Mr. Deane shuffled his feet some mystery in his life; but she knew and groaned, as their modest fly at also that, whatever it was, Gaunt last drew up to the steps, over which a striped awning had been spread, and he caught a glimpse of the many foot

Lady Roborough stood just within have liked to have refused, but Lord the drawing-room to receive the ed to him and glanced now and again guests, and Lord Gaunt stood at her elbow holding her bouquet.

Her keen eyes scanned Decima' face as she and her father were an rounced, and for a moment a look of surprise and admiration flashed in her ladyship's eyes as she gave Decima her hand.

At Decima's entrance. Gaunt's hear leaped, but his face grew paler if any-

"It was good of you to come." he sai in a low voice, and his hand close over hers with a firm pressure. Decima murmured something

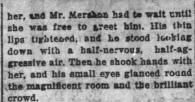
audible, and passing on, was swallow ed up in the crowd. Lady Roborough looked after her.

"What a sweet-looking girl!" she said in an under-tone to Gaunt. "It is a remarkable face; one sees so few really modest-looking girls nowadays I did not know Mr. Deane had a daughter. How is it I have not met her?" Gaunt looked straight before him the touch of the little gloved hand was

still throbbing through him "They are very quiet people and go owhere," he said, casually; too casually, for the sharp old lady glanced at him keenly. But Gaunt's face was

as impassive as usual and told nothing. There were several persons who knew Mr. Deane, and Decima found that she was not to pass unnotice as she had hoped and expected; for ner appearance had impressed others sides Lady Roborough; and the men were asking Mr. Deane to introduc

Presently, Mrs. Sherborne and Mr Mershon arrived. Mrs. Sherborne was ery pale and looked nervous, and Mr. on entered with lowered eyes, id kept them under their lids for minutes; then he raised them ked round with a kind of cover erness saw Decima, and made his way to her. There were several gentl on Dear her, and one was talking



"Quite a brilliant affair, isn't it?" he sid, with an attempt at a sneer. Decima looked about her with a very

ifferent expression. The splendor of the women's dresses, the flashing of the diamonds pleased her, and excited her a little. There was not a spark of envy in her bosom, not a tinge of regret for her own plain attire. Mr. Mershon's remark and its tone grated upon her, and she made no response She saw Lord Gaunt moving about the room, speaking to one and another and almost as if he were conscious that her eyes were resting upon him. he turned and looked at her, and sud-

denly came across to her. "Well, are you satisfied?" he said in a low voice, too low for Mershon to hear; and Mr. Mershon noticed the whispered tone and resented it with sharp resentment as he moved away

"Satisfied?" said Decima, looking un at him with a faint smile.

"Yes," he said; "this is your doing; you wanted me to see people, go into society—and here you are, you see!" He smiled, but there was a gravity and intensity in his gaze which De-

"Oh!" she said in repudiation. "But if it were true, then I am satisfied. How beautiful it is! I mean the rooms

"Which you decorated!" he said in

-"And the dresses and the jewels," she continued, disregarding his interruption. "It is quite significent, andand like a pageant. You ought to be very proud, Lord Gaunt; for it must be pleasant to have so many nice and beautiful persons in your house."

He looked at the girlish face uplift ed to him, and smiled enigmatically He noticed the plainness of her dress the absence of any ornament-he had noticed it the moment she enteredand he thought! "Not one of the women, with all their grand dresses and their diamonds, is so beautiful, so distinguished-looking, as this love of mine in her simple frock!"

"I am glad you are pleased," he said. quietly. "It will be my reward for being a good boy, and doing as I was

As he spoke, Mr. Mershon came un and offered her his arm. "I am to take you in. Miss Deane.

he said. Gaunt looked at him with an impassive face, in which no sign of his envy was visible, and went to the

Countess of Illminster, who was allotted to him. The brilliant crowd passed into the dining-room with its softly shaded lights. For this occasion the famous Caunt plate had been unearthed from the bank vanits, and the long table

shone with gold and silver. There were flowers everywhere, and they softened the glitter of the preciit is talked of to this day like most functions of its kind, by no means dreary.

Lady Roborough was the perfection of a hostess, and Gaunt exerted all the charm which belonged to his race. No one was better fitted to shine in society, and Decima, who was not very far from him, where he sat at the bottom of the table, thought, as she listenat his face, how much younger he looked then than when she had first met

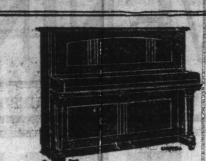
his part extremely well. He hated and loathed the whole affair, but no one had the least suspicion of his sentiment, or guessed that all the while he was talking so brilliantly and smiling so easefully, that he was wishing them all away-all but one little girl in dove-colored silk.

Gaunt's admirably assumed manne and mood proved infectious, and in stead of the dreary, commonplace small-talk, with its intervals of awk ward and embarrassing silence, which characteristic most dinner-parties conversation flowed freely, and laughter ran like an accompaniment.

(To be continued.)







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