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**Better a Peasant Than a Peer.**

CHAPTER XVII.  
LOVE AND A TITLE.

"And pa!" groaned Maud, wringing her hands; "and pa talking to him about pictures, and being his friend, in that horrid, awful way, only a few minutes ago! Oh, ma, I shall die with shame and vexation!"

"So shall I, I'm sure," muttered Georgina, "and to think we made so much of that temporary Mr. Fitzgibbon—though he is a viscount!"

"What's a viscount to a marquis—a real one!" said Mrs. Lambton.

"And—Maud, Georgina—how can you sit there, and let her lordship stand!" she cried.

The two girls jumped as if their chairs had suddenly bitten them, and each dragged a chair toward Jeanne, who stood with folded hands and downcast face, in all her bridal finery. "Here's a chair, Jeanne—my lady!" said both in a voice.

Jeanne started and looked around—the title was so strange and improbable.

"Oh, don't!" she cried, reproachfully. "Why do you all look at me so, and stand away from me? Have I done anything wrong? Don't look at me so, Aunt Jane."

And with the first tears she had shed on her marriage day, Jeanne threw herself at Aunt Jane's feet.

"There—there!" said the old lady, waiving from her trance, and crying, too. "Don't, Jeanne—don't! There's nothing to cry about, though you have frightened the hearts out of our bodies. Let me look at you, child."

And she took Jeanne's face in her hands.

"Yes, it is my Jeanne still, though she's a marchioness. But why did you keep it so secret?"

Jeanne looked up eagerly.

"I—I did not know it," she said, then faltered.

"Let's any one could see it isn't her fault—her lordship's fault, I mean," says Mrs. Lambton; "she was so surprised as any of us, weren't you, Jeanne—my lady, I mean? And to think that there's a real marquis downstairs, waiting to carry her off! Oh, dear! my poor head! And Lambton will be so angry with us all! I'll never forgive myself for making so free and easy with a marquis!"

"And the Marquis of Ferndale, too!" murmured Maud, in an awed whisper—for she had heard some of the stories of his power and greatness; "the Marquis of Ferndale! Oh, Jeanne, what a lucky girl you are!"

Jeanne started and looked around with a sudden flush, and the old light of frank pride in her eyes.

"Lucky!" she said; "yes, I am lucky, because I am happy—because he loves me—not because he is the marquis. Why do you all look so, and talk so strangely?" she said, standing in the middle of the room with questioning eyes and parted lips. "Shall I be any the happier for being a marchioness? What difference will it make? Do you think I care? No! I wish—yes, I wish that he was only Vernon Vane!"

And the tears sprang to her eyes.

"My dear Jeanne," muttered Maud, reproachfully. "It—it sounds wicked! To wish yourself plain Mrs. Vane, instead of a marchioness! Oh, ma!"

"Jeanne is quite right," said Aunt Jane, drying her eyes. "I know what she means! Don't cry, Jeanne! It will all come right! It is plain that Vane loves you, or why should he have done this? But—but I'm all dazed, and all your boxes are labeled 'Mrs. Vernon Vane,' too."

"And things all marked 'J. V.!' said Mrs. Lambton, with a despairing sigh. "What shall we do?"

Before this momentous problem received solution there came a hammering at the door, and shouts of—

"Jeanne! 'Aunt,' 'Jeanne.'"

Jeanne flies to the door. At least there is no one who will not "my lady" her and stand aloof.

"Hal!" she cries, and the next moment hugs him in her lace and satin. "Oh, Hal!"

"All right, Jeanne!" he says, brightly. "Don't cry, Jeanne! It's all right. We're a bit knocked over at first, of course, and you're upset; but Vane's none the worse for being a marquis, you know. Vane's a brick—a regular brick!"

"Hal!" cries Jeanne, holding him from her and then kissing him vigorously; "I love you! Tell them that again!"

"All right," repeats Hal, patting her encouragingly on the back. "We'll talk it over when you come back—before then, for Vane has asked me to go down to Castle Ferndale; and, I say, that's where you're going to spend the honeymoon—not abroad. And, aunt, why don't you get those false-lashes off her, and some decent togs on! Vane will be wanting to start directly, and she can't go looking like a figure of a Twelfth Day cake, you know!"

The boy's breezy voice and sound common sense rouses them all from their stupor. Pushing him, with a kiss, out of the room, Jeanne slips off her veil, and her bewildered attendants proceed to attire her in her traveling costume.

CHAPTER XVIII.  
"BETTER A PEASANT THAN A PEER."

When Jeanne came down, the carriage which was to bear her away from Newton Regis was at the door, and Vane was waiting for her, dressed in a loose traveling suit, and surrounded by Uncle John and Mr. Lambton and Bell, while Hal was rapidly and apparently superintending the placing of the luggage. To see the reverential airs with which Mr. Lambton watched Vane—the marquis—how he listened to every word he said from the most profound eagerness, was amusing. And when Jeanne appeared, the worthy gentleman came forward, bowing and smiling very much like his own butler.

But Jeanne had no eyes just then for any one but her own people, and it was not until Vane glanced at his watch, and Hal declared stoutly that they couldn't possibly catch the train, that she could tear herself from the embrace of the only mother she had known.

"Are you sure your lordship hasn't any commands for me?" reiterated Mr. Lambton for the hundredth time. "If there is anything I can do, any of us can do, please remember that we shall be only too humbly delighted to be of service, James—to the coachman—'be very careful, be extremely careful, sir, how you drive. My lord, he's a very steady man, and you can rely upon him.' Good-by, your ladyship."

"Good-by, Jeanne!" exclaimed Hal, poking his head through the window, at the risk of being run over. "Good-by, Jean! Good-by!" and the blue eyes suddenly dimmed with tears, as Jeanne reluctantly loosened his chubby hand.

"Good-by, Hal!" cried Vane, leaning forward. "It's not for long, remember. I'll take care of her. Good-by!"

"Good-by, Vernon!" shouted Hal, who not once had called him "my lord."

Jeanne kept her head out of the window until the excited group was lost sight of, then Vane put his arm around her and drew her toward him.

"Well, darling," he said, "and now have you quite forgiven me, or not?"

"Forgiven you?" said Jeanne, softly; "for what?" and she looked up shyly.

"For my deception," he said, with a questioning smile.

Jeanne dropped her face upon his breast.

"Why did you do it?" she asked, in a low voice.

"I'll have to tell you that?" he answered, and Jeanne, quick to note the slightest inflection of his voice, remarked the sudden, half-pained gravity.

"Do not tell me," she says, quickly. "Oh, Hal!"

"Yes," he says, "I must. From this moment there must be no concealment, not the shadow of a shadow between us, my darling; and I must tell you. But weren't you surprised, Jeanne?"

This question made Jeanne's heart leap.

Now is the time for her confession; now is the time to tell him of the breakdown on the Newton road, and Lady Lucette's visit; now is the time to whisper meekly, confidingly of her doubts and fears, which led her to keep from him the discovery of his secret. Why doesn't she speak? Why doesn't she say: "I knew it, Vernon, last night; I knew it was the Marquis of Ferndale whom I married this morning!"

But Jeanne is silent. Jeanne, the proudly candid, and fearlessly frank, dreads the confession.

So precious is the touch of his hand, so sweet are his loving words and voice, that she dares not risk losing them. So Jeanne, silent, is silent.

He waits a moment, then laughs softly.

"Of course you were, how could you be otherwise? It was my fault; I ought to have taken Bell into my confidence when I gave him the license, but I clung to my secret as long as I could—I preferred being Vernon Vane till the last moment; and no wonder. Was it not Vernon Vane you loved, and not the Marquis of Ferndale?"

Jeanne opens her lips to rush upon her confession; but he goes on, and his next words decide her forever.

"Yes, Jeanne, it was cruel. It was unkind to keep you in the dark, and let them spring a mine upon you at the last moment, and before them all. But, Jeanne, listen, and confess that I have some excuse."

He pauses a moment, and gently caresses her hand, and, lover-like, lets his eyes wander over her graceful form longingly.

"Jeanne," he says, "it is too true, unfortunately—I am the Marquis of Ferndale."

"Unfortunately?" murmurs Jeanne.

He nods, and musically divides the slim fingers and entwines them in his own.

"Unfortunately," he repeats. "Jeanne, it is better for a man who has an honest heart to be born peasant than peer—better to be a hewer of wood and drawer of water than to wear a coronet and a peer's robes. Your peasant gets the truth sometimes, and wins true friends and true love; but your lord, in his crimson and his ermine, seldom or never. Some live and thrive in an atmosphere of lying adulation and flattering falsehood; but, thank heaven, there was enough honesty and truth in me to make the life I led unbearable. Jeanne, but if you I should have been a misanthrope, a hater of my kind, a disbeliever in the honesty of men, and the purity of women—but for you, my sweet rescuing angel—my wife!"

His wife! For the first time the words fall on Jeanne's ears, and make her heart beat with a thrill, half of pleasure, half of pain. Like an innocent child—for no child could be more ignorant of the full significance of the word than Jeanne—Jeanne, who has been brought up like a nun in a convent, spotless and unconscious of all the deep mysteries of life, she nestled closer as if for protection from her own love.

"Listen," he says, as he presses her closer to him. "I was younger than you were when I first saw you, when they came and told me that the grim old man, my father, was dead, and that I was the Marquis of Ferndale. Up to that hour I had only a vague idea of the meaning and significance of my rank and power. Suddenly I realized that I was the possessor of one of the oldest and highest titles in the land, that I was the lord of thousands of acres, which I had never seen or heard of, of castles and houses into which I had never set foot, of wealth which went beyond the dreams of avarice. Pleasure, they told me, was henceforth to be my handmaid; the world was at my feet. So I found it. I tried pleasure; I launched myself upon the charm of life, and went madly upon my voyage, and it led me—where? To Newton Regis, Jeanne, disgusted with pleasure which I had found bitter as Dead Sea fruit, weary

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of the world which had proved false, and distrustful of every soul that approached me. I loathed my title; 'my lord' sounded in my ears as a term of reproach—as the preliminary to some falsehood. Friendship I have tried to the balance and found wanting, save in one instance. It was not the man they cared for, but the marquis. But all this I could have borne with an easy contempt for myself and my kind—but, Jeanne, ah, Jeanne! how can I tell you, you who have had no lover but me, save poor Bell—poor Bell!"

Jeanne blushes and clings closer.

"How can I tell you," he goes on; "you who have brought me a heart so fresh and unstained, of this dark, mean passage in my history? Jeanne, I tried to love—"

Jeanne starts, and her face pales.

My lord marquis, if you were a wise man you would have stopped short ere that word was said. With all your knowledge of the human heart you have failed to learn that where the passion of love is, there also lurks, dormant and asleep, maybe, the dread demon jealousy.

(To be continued.)

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**Household Notes.**

Thick fish should be fried slowly. Never use yeast with pastry flour. Cheese bars are excellent to serve with salad.

Wash, clean and dry currants before using.

Narrow leaf pans insure thorough baking.

One pint of butter is equivalent to one pound.

A cupful of peanut butter improves fudge.

Slices of lemon should be served with pork pie.

The well ventilated house is the easiest to heat.

Steaming vegetables is preferable to boiling them.

Cereals are most important for the winter breakfast.

Flavor cream minis with a little salt, vanilla and mnt.

Reshape woolen vests and sweaters frequently while drying.

A pinch of powdered sage leaves gives a relish to cold pork.

Thick rice soup is excellent flavored with onions and tomatoes.

Stoned and chopped dates give a nutty taste to oatmeal cookies.

Let the gas oven stand open for a few minutes after being used.

Cream of peanut butter soup is delicious served with hot toast.

Game should be cooked longer in proportion to its weight than poultry.

Meat or fish to be used in salads should be cut in small cubes or shredded.

New potatoes have a delicious flavor when cooked with a bit of mint.

Salted crackers and preserved ginger are delicious served with cream.

If the eggs are added to cake batter too quickly, the mixture will curdle.

Green vegetables will keep their color if boiled with the lid of the pot off.

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