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"KYRA,"
OR,
The Ward of the Earl of Vering.

CHAPTER XIX.
The Love of Other Days.

"Oh, he, Wild Jack, had been over the whole globe!" laughed Lady Pacewell, with a little blush. Her ladyship had been one of Wild Jack's lady-loves. "Yes, he disappeared quite suddenly, and only came above the horizon an hour or two before the old earl died."

"How romantic!"

"Wait; there is more romance than that! It seems that he did not return alone—of course, I am only telling you gossip now, for I am not in his confidence, nor is any other man or woman, I believe—but the story goes that he brought a young girl—" Lady Pacewell broke off suddenly. "Tell me my dear—your eyes are so good—is that a carriage coming along the park?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Gorton.

"Then, I shall have to postpone the history of Lord Vering, for that must be the late comers of our party. I expected them by this train. Go in, dear, and give the gentlemen their tea, will you? I must receive those people, and see if any dinner is left," and she turned into the dining-room.

The carriages came swiftly up the drive of Ashwell Park, and, as the gentlemen left the dining room and got their tea in the drawing-room, the new guests made their entrance at the hall.

The drawing-room of Ashwell Park was a large, old-fashioned room, with quiet nooks and curtained recesses, and four French windows opening on to the terrace. The party was not a large one, and by the time the new arrivals had finished their dinner and reached the drawing-room, the party already settled in the house was spread about at the piano, the whist-table, and some in the recesses, talking over the coming season. One or two of the gentlemen were, by special permission, smoking out on the terrace, for the night was a warm one, as we have said. Among the latter was Lord Percy, leaning over the balustrade, smoking and thinking, as usual.

The newcomers drew round the tea table, at which Mrs. Gorton was still officiating, talking and laughing, and making acquaintance.

Percy heard the increased number of voices, and, with a start, awoke from his reverie, lit another cigar,

and drew farther away, to resume his meditation.

Of whom was he thinking? Of a certain young girl, now struggling with English grammar and English manners at Minerva House.

Presently, a lady—one of the newcomers—detached herself from the rest and sauntered through the open window on to the terrace.

Presently, the aroma of a cigar reached her; she coughed slightly, and turned. A gentleman was smoking near her; at the little cough, he started, and, throwing the cigar away, came forward.

"I beg your pardon, Lady Pacewell; I did not know any lady was near—" Then he stopped, for the lady had started, and, with one hand resting slightly on the balustrade, turned face to face to him.

"I am not Lady Pacewell," she said, in a voice sweetly soft and tremulous, with a half-doubtful questioning.

At the sound of that voice, Lord Percy pulled up short, and uttered an exclamation:

"Lillian—Marchioness!"

The lady echoed the low cry, and turned away from him, with her hand clinched tightly.

"Percy Chester—Lord Vering!"

There was a moment's silence, the man looking at the woman who had betrayed him, the woman pressing her hand to her heart and struggling for calm.

She was the first to break that terrible silence.

"You called me marchioness. I am not marchioness. I am—Lillian Devigne."

"What!" he said, in a voice low and troubled. "Lillian Devigne?"

"Yes," she said, with a weary smile, that gave a pensive loveliness to her face beyond words, "I am still Lillian Devigne."

Percy's dark eye-brows contracted, as he looked at her and listened.

"And the marquis?" he said, with a grim cynicism that brought the red blood to her delicate face.

"He is dead," she replied, in a low voice. "Have you not heard?"

"I have heard nothing," he said. "I have been out of the world since—"

He paused, significantly, and she winced visibly.

"When did he die—where?"

She turned her face from him, and leaned one white arm upon the balcony.

"He died the day before that fixed for our marriage; died in an hour after a heavy dinner at the Duke of Gloumin's," and she smiled, bitterly.

Percy stood regarding her, in silence. And so the price she had betrayed him for had slipped from her

grasp! It was bare justice—and yet—and yet he pitied her—a dangerous sentiment for any man in his position to feel for a woman, and such a woman!

There was a profound silence; then she turned to him.

"And you? Ah, but I have no right to ask! I have no right to ask, although I have thought of you so often—always! Lord Percy, I have wronged you past forgiveness; I have prayed that you might forget, as profoundly as you, no doubt, hate me! But I cannot forget—I cannot forgive myself!"

As she spoke, she placed her hand, white-gloved, but not more white than her exquisite arm, against her heart, and then let it fall upon the stone balcony.

"I cannot forget, and I see myself vile and base, and yet not so base as weak, and I loathe myself. I did not know you were here. They told me you remained at home, secluded and alone; that you visited no one. I did not dream that I should be likely to meet you here, or I would not have come."

Still he was silent. What was there for him to say?

"And yet," she resumed, almost inaudibly, "it was not to spare myself that I would have avoided you. I am punished night and day, by conscience by remorse, and I hug my punishment. If I had spent one hour of happiness since—since you left me, I should die now at your feet with shame. But I have suffered, Lord Percy, almost enough for expiation. Even you, could you but know its extent, would deem my remorse sufficient. No doubt, long before this you have had no feeling in the matter but one of profound thankfulness for your escape from one so worthless, so worldly, so mercenary; and my presence here can only cause you annoyance, not pain. How often do I say to myself: 'He never loved me! No man so good, so wise, could have really loved me.'"

"That assurance was false," said Percy, in a deep, low voice, speaking for the first time. "I loved you, and you knew it."

She hid her eyes in her hands, and a slight tremor ran through her frame, whether of pain or pleasure, of his words, who can say?

"The deeper the wrong, then. Now I know that you must hate the sight of my face."

She looked up at the sky, and smiled.

"It is too late to-night, or mamma should ask them to let us go. Tomorrow she shall make some excuse, and we will get from your sight."

He leaned over the balcony for a moment; then said, gravely:

"There is no need for anything of the kind. If we two cannot meet without pain to either, it shall be for me to retreat, not you; but there should be no such feeling after these years. There is no bitterness in my heart against you, Miss Devigne; if I cannot forget, I can forgive."

As he ceased, his noble words ringing low and clear on the evening air, the beautiful woman, listening in breathless eagerness, she bowed her head upon her hands, and her bosom rose and fell with her efforts to suppress the sobs that shook her.

"Hush!" he said, gently. "Hush! You magnify the—the mistake of the past. You have suffered too greatly; it is all expiated, for I have forgotten, but I am not unhappy. It is time that you should strive to forget."

"You are happy," she said, in a low, tremulous voice, her eyes fixed on his face, as if she could read his soul.

"You tell me that I may stay here, that you do not hate me; if you knew how great a weight you had lifted from my heart—if I could but then hope that you would ever bring yourself to forgive me!"

He smiled gravely.

"I have forgiven you long ago," he said, simply.

She looked up at him, with wide, tearful, abashed eyes; then, as he held out his hand, she bowed her lovely head over it, and—he fancied afterward that she kissed it.

"How noble you are!" she breathed. "How noble!"

Then, without a word more, she looked at him full in the face, and meekly bowed, and glided away.

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Somewh
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HEAD WAITER: E —comfortable Gas Fire
'ouse.
GUEST:—Gas Fire.
HEAD WAITER: N the times, sir, and it's want. If you'll excuse I find that our people cooked food, good fires, do that with coal—not s gas—everywhere. We d the water by gas and a bath in ten minutes if and whatever you like minute.
GUEST: That sou ioned part come in?
HEAD WAITER: E cerned. But there's th if I may say so—the 'o
GUEST: (a trifle h right away—if you'll ex
HEAD WAITER: T There's plenty of 'ot w cupboard in the bathroo
GUEST: Right O!
HEAD WAITER: V mutton and sweets?
GUEST: Well, if th I'm rather late. I'm affa
HEAD WAITER: E kind of comfort means e don't have no coals to c to attend to—This 'ere time, and—
GUEST: You may a have that bath. (ase though he does talk a lo I've struck a decent bil sharply.)
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