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**Better a Peasant Than a Peer.**

CHAPTER XXVIII.  
IN DEEP WATERS.

He is like a faithful and attached dog, whose whole being is fixed upon his master—or his mistress—and who waits anxiously, and yet not obtrusively, for a word from her.

No one notices this, and yet—yes, one person does, and he is "Old Bull!" Half an hour after the ladies have left for the drawing-room, Hal puts his head around the door of that apartment, and having with great difficulty attracted Jeanne's attention, beckons her mysteriously.

"Well, what is it?" she says, coming out to him; "have you had enough wine? where are the others?"

"Still at it—not at the wine," says Hal, "but—the cackle. That member of Parliament you brought with you has got 'em on to politics, and they seem likely to go on worrying that subject till midnight. If there's anything I hate its politics—"

"But you shouldn't run away and leave them," says Jeanne, laughing. "Would you have me to fly to the drink?" demands Hal, with mock severity. "Seriously, if I stayed there I should have been driven to drown my sense of hearing in the red port, and besides, I want a pipe."

"Well, I haven't got one in my pocket!" interrupts Jeanne.

"Don't be impertinent, miss, or I'll leave you; and you'll be sorry when I tell you that I've got the key of the round tower, that it's a splendid night—a new moon—and that I'm going up there to smoke."

"To the moon!"

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SEALED TIGHT—KEPT RIGHT

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"Italian!" says Jeanne. "Who lives there? They must be our nearest neighbors."

"Oh, only an Italian gentleman—Prince Verona."

"Only a prince!" laughs Jeanne. "What delightfully republican indifference to a title—only a prince! And is he married, and has he any sons?"

"No," says Hal. "I'll have another pipe."

"Lives there all alone in that big place?" says Jeanne. "Poor fellow!"

"There's a daughter," says Hal. "You said—"

"There were no sons," says Hal, doggedly. "None are there. There is only one child, the Princess Verona."

He says it too carelessly; Jeanne, woman-like, grows instantly curious. "A princess! Have you seen her, Hal? What is she like?"

"I've seen her," says Hal, leaning over the battlement.

"How old is she? Is she pretty?"

"She? About your age—oh, younger; about my age, I suppose. Pretty?" and his caution is overwhelmed by his feelings. "Pretty isn't the name for her; she's perfectly lovely. Her eyes are as dark, and, no, don't think they're black—with long lashes that sweep her cheeks—and her hair—you know that picture which Vane showed us of the Italian girl whom he saw at Naples? Well, that is what the princess is like! And fancy, Jeanne! she lives all alone with the old man, her father, who burns a lamp in daylight, and sits day and night poring over compendiums and plots, alone with him and a wooden-faced doll as her companion! And she—the princess. I mean—is like—like—like a flower, all life and brightness, excepting sometimes, and there she is shut up like a beautiful wild bird in a cage!"

He stops, for, looking around—he has been staring at the villa during this half-unconscious rhapsody—he sees Jeanne's eyes fixed on him with a half-laughing, half-serious expression.

"Well," he says, "what are you staring at?"

She is silent for a moment, and also looks at the villa.

"Hal, how often have you met the princess?"

"Six times," he says, promptly. "You have remembered and kept account of every time; you have remembered her eyes so intensely that you know they are not black—though so dark. Oh, Hal, you foolish boy!"

"What do you mean?" he demands, with a heightened color.

"Hal, you are in love with her!" says Jeanne, with a smile.

He looks at her with a gravely curious and earnest gaze.

"Am I?" he says. "Do you think so?"

Then he turns to the battlements with his face away from her.

"I haven't told you all," he says. "The Princess Verona is engaged to be married. To a Count Mikloff."

"Oh, Hal!" she murmurs.

"To Count Mikloff," he goes on, as if he would not spare himself a single pang. "A Russian nobleman, a man old enough to be her father, grandfather! with a manner like a French polish, and a face like creased parchment."

"Oh, Hal!" she murmurs again, and her soft arm creeps around his neck. "My poor boy! Can nothing be done? Is there no way—?"

"No, nothing," he says. "I—whose this! and he turns his white, working face, as a step sounds behind them. "I—there is some one coming, keep them off me for a moment."

It is Clarence Lane.

"As you there, Lady Ferndale!" he asks.

"Yes," says Jeanne. "How did you come up here?"

"Found my way by instinct," he says, with significance. "You left the door open, and I climbed on the chance. Instinct is right, you see, as usual."

Jeanne laughs. She is still thinking of her poor boy's white face and broken voice.

"Yes, isn't this a beautiful view?" and she leads him away from Hal.

It is dangerous to rely on the chaperonage of a brother, doubly dangerous to rely on him when he is in love. Hal, thinking only of himself, utterly oblivious of the impropriety of leaving Jeanne and Clarence alone on the top of the tower, sees the door before him and escapes.

Five minutes afterward, down in the drawing-room, a song is wanted, and Vane looks around for Jeanne.

"Where is Lady Ferndale?" he asks.

Lady Lucelle is sitting near, toying with a besique box. She looks up—she has noticed Jeanne's absence, but she has bided her time. Hal, hearing the question, looks up also.

"Jeanne," he says, rousing. "Oh, by Jove! I left her on the tower—"

"Lord Lane has the music in charge," says Lady Lucelle, slyly. "Let us ask him—why, where has he gone?" and she looks around the room.

"Lane—oh, I left him with Jeanne," says Hal, carelessly.

Vane's face grows suddenly hard. "Shall we play besique?" he says, turning to Lady Lucelle.

"Thanks, I should like it. I hope," she says, with amiable anxiety, "Jeanne won't catch cold!"

But Vane has recovered himself. "Lane will take care of that, no doubt," he says, in measured accents. "Oh, here they are!" says Lady Lucelle, as Jeanne, closely followed by Clarence, entered.

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