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**Lord Cecil's Dilemma**  
—OR—  
**The Picnic**  
—in—  
**Woodall Forest**

CHAPTER XXXII.

Instead of going to her apartments, Ada waited at the end of a passage, where she knew that the new parlourmaid could be spoken to. She wished to see the woman for several reasons, though there was nothing definitely arranged in her mind yet. She could hardly explain to herself why she withheld her discovery from Lady Hastings and her son. It was her duty to tell them everything, but she shrank from it, lest it should strain the position between herself and Sir Charles.

She had not long to wait, and easily recognized the trim figure of the woman who called herself Agnes Maitland.

As she was passing, with eyes downcast, Ada spoke to her sharply, and the woman stopped and turned upon her the flashing black orbs that had set her wondering when she first saw them in the picture gallery.

"I wish to speak to you," said Miss Craythorne.

The woman started slightly, but replied:

"I am at your service, mademoiselle."

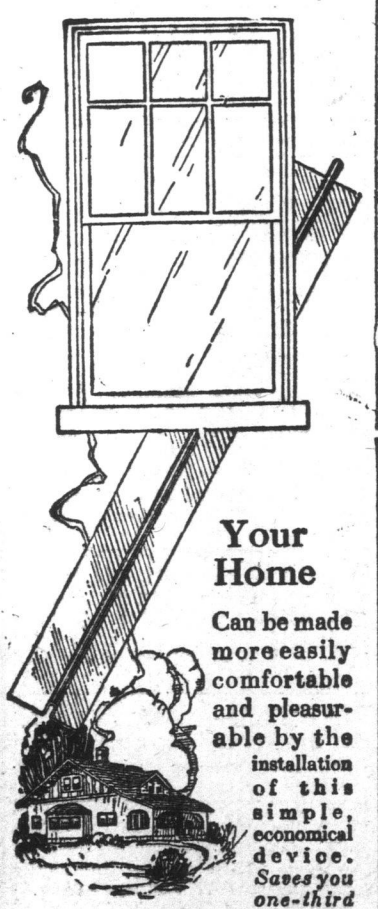
Ada hungrily devoured her features. She was young—as young as Miss Craythorne—and decidedly handsome, though thin and pale.

"Not here," was the quick rejoinder. "We shall be seen. Will you come to my room?"

The servant looked at her fiercely, drew a long breath, and replied:

"In half-an-hour I will be there!"

Then she passed on, for others were near, and Ada fled away like a guilty thing. She almost felt afraid of what she had done. She could not forget Angas Maitland's wicked, snapping



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eyes, and she scarcely liked being alone with this woman.

She went to her apartments, nevertheless, and waited, taking care to employ Annette that she would be unable to hear anything that passed.

When the woman came she stared at Miss Craythorne with a mixture of curiosity and defiance.

"Close the door after you," said Ada. "We do not want any listeners."

Agnes Maitland obeyed, then faced Miss Craythorne, saying:

"I suppose you have found out in some way that I am here with forged testimonials? Why did you not bring me before the lady of the house? Or has she deputed you, as its possible future mistress, to relieve her of the responsibility of inquisitor?"

There was insolence in her sneering tones, rage in her scintillating eyes.

"You are mistaken," replied Ada, haughtily. "I desired to see you for your own good. I want to know why the wife of Sir Charles Hastings is a servant in her own household!"

"You know this?"

"Yes, and more. You must either claim your rights, if they are yours, or renounce them for the man who followed you here, who intends to commit murder."

"Why do you dare to dictate to me, knowing who I am? I know nothing of the man you refer to. I can state my own case to Sir Charles when I see fit to do so."

"Very well," responded Miss Craythorne, indifferently, "but I shall take care to warn him at once."

She made a gesture signifying that the interview was ended, but the woman who called herself Agnes Maitland did not move.

"I think that you are in love with my husband," she said, sneeringly.

"I refuse to discuss the question with you."

"Yes, I know that you are! He seems to be light of love, like the rest of them. It was the earl's golden-haired darling a few months since; now it is you! You cannot think how I have hated you and her for it; but there are few women who could look upon Sir Charles and not love him. I hoped that it would be my turn some day, but I can hope no longer—I can hope no longer, now that he has returned to torture me! I might have been my lady—and yet the life would have been one of doubt and misery—unless—unless—!" She paused for a moment, then shook her hands with a gesture of despair. "No, it is all over, and I must escape. I have no right here, and I must escape my burden, the man who has ruined me, or I may become a murderess! I should like to see him dead at my feet!"

She glared at Ada, and, after a brief hesitation, whispered:

"Miss Craythorne, what would you give to learn that Sir Charles is not married to all—that no one has any claim upon him—that the marriage was null and void? What would you give? Oh, what glorious news for you!"

"Do you know what you are saying?" demanded Ada, startled in spite of herself.

"I know what I am saying! I am not a fool! Ask the old fox, Lupus. I had planned to hoodwink him. He wanted to prey upon me—to say my heart's blood: I came here determined to win my husband's respect, at least; but I had to adopt a disguise to put Lupus off the scent. I intended appealing to Sir Charles' chivalry, and persuading him to marry me publicly, because my first husband was alive when we were married before. I wanted to do this to defeat Lupus. The man you saw last night is my husband; but I will have no more of him, and must fly. If he knew that I had told you this, he would kill me, and you must not make use of it until I am far away. This is all I ask you—and as much money as you can give to me, for I am penniless."

"I am sorry for you," said Ada.

when she had recovered from her surprise.

"I don't want your pity. I have made the way clear to you. I have thwarted him. Promise that you will not say one word to any one until you hear from me—with the story in writing."

"I promise," said Ada.

"Then keep it, or my life will not be safe," she went on, feverishly. "Now, the money; be generous; it is a new start in life for me."

"I will get you as much as I can; I must borrow it from Sir Charles. Meet me here again at three o'clock."

"Do not fail me, for heaven's sake! and do not forget to keep faith with me. I must leave here to-night."

"You may trust me," Ada replied.

With all her thought for this poor, misguided creature before her, there was a ring of gladness in her tones. Sir Charles Hastings was a free man; she held his freedom in her hands. What sweet possibilities were now spread before her mental vision. She never paused to think that this woman's story might be untrue. She never dreamed that it might be a ruse to enlist her sym pathies—sympathies that would expand into generosity, to the giving of much gold.

"At three I shall be here," Agnes Maitland reminded her, and then was gone.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The young baronet could not help remarking the brightness of his guest's eyes, the peach-bloom of her cheek, the gaiety of her spirits, as compared with her appearance earlier in the day.

"I have made inquiries in the village," he said, in answer to his mother's questioning looks, "and it appears that some fellow was at the alehouse drinking. He boasted that his sister was employed here, and that he had come to see her. It is my belief that the man who frightened you, Miss Craythorne, was he."

"I have no doubt of it," replied Ada. "A burglar would not leave traces behind him, or sleep for hours out in the cold."

"He was intoxicated, and wandered here, I should imagine, aimlessly. With the usual luck of the drunkard, he escaped harm. Under the circumstances, I shall not trouble to notify the police, as he is not likely to come again."

Miss Craythorne could not resist a slight shudder. He would come again, and when he found that the woman was gone, there would be violent scenes. But she dared not tell Sir Charles yet. She must keep the promise that she had made.

After lunch Lady Hastings retired for her afternoon nap, and Sir Charles went to the library to read and smoke. He was surprised to hear a gentle tap at the door almost before he had composed himself, and knew at once that it was not the rap of a servant.

He stepped quickly forward, and found Ada Craythorne standing in the doorway, smiling at him in a way that he was unable to comprehend. He felt a little confused, for his mother had that morning hinted to him how much Ada cared for him. He had often fancied so himself, and rejected the thought. He was not vain enough to believe, without ample proof, that any woman loved him. He rejected the thought because he did not wish to believe it. His love was given; there was but one woman living who could ever be loved by him.

(To be continued.)

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**Fashion Plates.**

The Home Dressmaker should keep a Catalogue Scrap Book of our Pattern Cuts. These will be found very useful to refer to from time to time.



Pattern 3530 was used for this design. It is cut in 3 Sizes: 16, 18 and 20 years. An 18 year size will require 6 1/4 yards of 40 inch material.

Voile, foulard, challis, figured or embroidered batiste, linen, satin, pongee, poplin and chambray could be used for this model. The width of the skirt at the foot is 2 yards.

Pattern mailed to any address on receipt of 15c. in silver or stamps.

**A "TRIM" AND SIMPLE HOUSE OF WORK DRESS.**



Pattern 3617 is here attractively illustrated. It is cut in 7 Sizes: 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44 and 46 inches bust measure. A 38 inch size will require 6 1/2 yards of 27 inch material.

Figured percale with banding, piping or folds of a plain contrasting color would be pleasing for this.

Gingham, chambray, lawn, saten, mohair, repp and poplin are serviceable and appropriate. The width of the skirt at the foot is about 2 yards.

A pattern of this illustration mailed to any address on receipt of 15c. in silver or stamps.

**Fads and Fashions.**

A sleeveless model of black features a choux of black ostrich on the tip of left shoulder.

The new caracul ribbon is used for the crown of a small chic hat with a trim of mole skin.

Brightly painted stiff kid slippers finished with leaves or ribbon ruchings are a new millinery trimming.

A college frock of navy blue serge is piped in red and has the monogram of the college in red and white.

Long strings of those tiny imitation pearls are dainty enough to be worn by the women of good taste.

Seen on Fifth Avenue was a soft cream silk with dull brown coin dots and brown snakes of program ribbon.

Simple frocks of cotton are favored for beach wear. One of voile employs fine inset pleating of a darker tone.

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