



Love in the Abbey

Lady Ethel's Rival

CHAPTER XXVI FASHIONABLE CONSPIRATORS. A sudden thrill of satisfaction, of pride, runs through him, as he looks down upon this beautiful daughter of an earl, and thinks that it is for him— for Sydney Calthrop, whom the world calls an adventurer, springing from no one knows where, the hanger-on, the confidential secretary, servant of the great Lord Sterne—it is for him that an heiress in her own right, beautiful, and revered by all about her, waits, wan and anxious, in the dead of night, compromising her fair name, sacrificing her proud dignity, all to get word of him whom she has made an accomplice and confidant!

He looks at her and waits with a malicious satisfaction; after all, he thinks, he is not the only one who suffers; the plagues of love and jealousy tortures these great ones so high above him; why should he complain? If he suffers, he suffers in good company. Standing with her costly Indian shawl drawn round her and nearly concealing her face, Ethel looks up at last with an impatience that overmasters her. "Well!" she says, "I'm telling her impetuosity under a smile. "You see how powerful a woman's curiosity may become, Mr. Calthrop. I am the most curious of women—when I am interested in anything—and I have waited to hear if you have anything to tell me."

"I was very kind and gracious of you to sit up," he says, with the most respectful inflection in his voice and a gesture of acknowledgment. Ethel flashes a glance of haughty interrogation. "By no means; I do not think they have all retired yet." He passes his hand over his mouth to wipe away a smile. "Oh, no, it is not more than one o'clock." Ethel flushes hotly and keeps her eyes upon the ground. "I should have been back long before this but for the charm of Lord Sterne's conversation; there is no breaking the spell which he exerts, and with ease, when he cares to, Lady Ethel."

Ethel's fan moves to and fro with a quick, impatient movement. "Why do you hesitate?" she says, with a great contempt that covers

both of them. "Have you failed?" A smile, which he does not conceal, crosses his face. "I have no such word in my dictionary, Lady Ethel. I have never failed in anything I have attempted. No, I have not failed as yet, and I shall not fail."

She looks at him with a curious, eager glance. "Do you wish me to tell you all I have done?" he asks respectfully. "No," she says in a low voice, with downcast eyes. "Certainly it is not worth while; the recital of my modus operandi for curing a friend of a foolish fancy would bore you as much as the undertaking bored me."

Ethel looks out with baffled curiosity just visible through her veil of haughty pride. Sydney Calthrop watches her with a complacent satisfaction that penetrates the veil, and reads her as easily as he would read a book. "You remember, Lady Ethel," he says, with a little laugh, "the old Oriental story of the Caliph, who was so heartily tired of having everything his own way, of the perpetual and monotonous round of pleasant sensations, that he went out one day in search of a good stone wall, and having found it, knocked his head against it—just for the pleasure of the new sensation—pain. Elliot—poor fellow—is the Caliph over again. Ever since he was born, Fate has laid herself out to lavish good gifts upon him. What other men have to fight and struggle for, dropped like plums into his mouth. Fortune, fickle to all the rest of the world, was constant to him; she smiles still, with a significant inflection of the voice that brings the color to his listener's face. "Yes, she sets before him the best and grandest gift, and he, poor infatuated Calthrop, looks for a stone wall; more fortunate than the Oriental potentate, however, he possesses a friend to knock his head for him. I am that friend, Lady Ethel, and your charming cousin—too charming for such a similitude to be pardonable, really—is the stone wall."

He laughs softly, with evident enjoyment of his own wit, then in a lower voice and a grave one, says: "The sequel to the Eastern fable is obvious; the Caliph got the court physician to bind up his majesty's head, and he returned to the delights of his palace with a decided aversion to walls of all kinds. I do not think that my Caliph's head is injured to the extent of requiring surgical treatment."

"You think—" says Lady Ethel, flushing and pressing her under lip with her white teeth. "That Lord Sterne has been the victim of one of his frequent fancies and illusions; though they are frequent, they are happily transient, and once passed, they are quickly forgotten. Oh! That is the great privilege of your Caliphs, Lady Ethel! All the world is made for them, and they have but the weariness of selecting from the general abundance the fruit or flower which their jaded fancy may crave for the moment."

turns her eyes upon him, but they sink before the shrewd, bland, commonplace acuteness of the adventurer, and in an embarrassed tone, she says: "I—I think we all ought to be much obliged to you, Mr. Calthrop; dear Kitty is like a sister to me, and—and—we should all be so grieved if, by some stupid mistake, she has occasioned any pain or her feelings were hurt."

"Miss Trevelyan," murmurs the complacent strategist, taking up the cue, "is so young and so unused to the world." "A child—dear Kitty!" murmurs Ethel, swaying her fan coolly, but with a suspicious light in her eyes. "A child! little more," asserts Sydney Calthrop; "a child with marvelous sprits and warm and fertile imagination. Just the sort of young girl, Lady Ethel, to be deceived by the impulsive language and emphatic courtesy of such a man as Elliot; for with all his genius—perhaps because of it, he is influenced by his feelings—by the emotion of the hour—more than is any other man I know. Yes—musingly eyeing the fair face with a hidden smile of malice—"I can well imagine the effect of Lord Sterne's voice and manner—I know them so well, and have seen them exercised so often—upon an originaire, impulsive young girl like Miss Trevelyan. Elliot is one of those men who can charm without an effort; one can underestimate the results where such an effort is made. I have always told him that if his lot had been cast upon the mimic stage instead of the real one, he would have made the finest lover since Garrick."

Ethel flushes, then turns pale—in her mind's eye the words, as it was intended they should, call up a vision of the man she loves at the feet of Kitty, of Kitty, radiant and beautiful—for Ethel knows how beautiful the little gypsy face can be at times—and the vision is like a dagger stab. With a sudden click the fan closes, and she rises, majestic and self-possessed. Sydney Calthrop moves noiselessly to the door, and with his hand upon the handle, turns and smiles innocently. "We are like a couple of conspirators in a three-act drama, Lady Ethel, are we not? For consistency we should be wrapped in long cloaks and scowled at each other under broad-brimmed hats. Ah! with an amiable little laugh—"If all conspirators would confine themselves, as we do, to plotting for the good of their friends, instead of their own advancement, the three-act dramas would be duller even than they are!" and with this parting stab, Mr. Sydney Calthrop bows the imperial beauty out, and closing the door, falls into a chair to indulge in a burst of noiseless laughter. Suddenly, a thought strikes him, and he hurries into the hall, just in time to see Ethel moving noiselessly up the great stairs. As he appears, she stops and bends over. "One word more," he whispers. "I heard Lord Reginald expresses a desire for the gay delights of Paris. Paris is very full just now, and—I think your brother would enjoy himself."

Ethel looks straight before her. "The weather, too," he continues, "is favorable for the Channel; in our uncertain climate it is as well to seize the moment when the barometer says fair. To-morrow night he would stand a capital chance of a good passage; I would not answer for the weather after to-morrow, Lady Ethel!" Ethel flushes and inclines her head. "To-morrow, I understand," she murmurs, and passes on her way. "Yes," says Mr. Calthrop, "women are born intriguantes. She understands, of course she does! Young Reg will be in Paris to-morrow night, and out of the way of asking awkward questions. As a rule, explanations are essential to the unravelling of a muddle, but we don't want Master Reg's explanations. No, better go to Paris and stay there."

CHAPTER XXVII AN IMPORTANT LETTER. "MARY, how many days have I slept through?" exclaims Kitty, sitting bolt upright on the side of the bed from which she has sprung, roused by Mary's voice, which, imploring and portentous at one and the same time, declares that it is nine o'clock. "Why didn't you call me at seven as usual? Ah! I forgot this is Jones' morning for delivering the letters; and, of course, from seven till now you

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have been discussing politics with that ingenious youth at the stable gate. "Oh, Miss Kitty!" murmurs Mary, blushingly remonstrative. "I did call you at seven, but you didn't answer; and, what's more, I came in at eight on tiptoe, and you were fast asleep, and you looked so happy, smiling like a—"

"Cheshire cat! Thanks, Mary," says Kitty, with a touch of color on her own cheeks; "that will do. If you think I am going to condone your sins of omission and commission for the sake of a spoonful of flattery, you are mistaken." "Well, miss," reiterates Mary, from the toilet table, "I would like to see the person as would have had the heart to wake you! And you did look happy, miss—indeed you did—"

"Mary," interrupts Kitty, her eyes sparkling with that touch of pleasant sarcasm latent in her, "your eyes deceive you—I am both angry and unhappy. No, no!" she says suddenly, as if alarmed at the probable consequence of so outrageous a falsehood; "I am happy, Mary, and will forgive you for not waking me. Look out, and tell me what sort of a morning it is."

"Lovely, Miss Kitty." "I knew it would be," says Kitty, softly to herself. "What are you hunting for?" she adds, apostrophizing the half of Mary which projects from beneath the bed. "I'm looking for your morning dress, Miss Kitty. You had only worn it once, and I can't think where you put it."

"Never mind," says Kitty, with an assumption of good-humored indifference; "I've no doubt you have mislaid it somewhere; you are a careless, untidy girl, Mary, and will never be anything else for all the good example I set you—"

Kitty, be it remarked, has never been known to hang up a garment or put one in its proper place since she has possessed a garment to divest herself of. "Never mind," she repeats as Mary comes to the surface, red as to the face and tumbled as to the hair. "You can look out another while I have my bath."

"And with a low, musical little laugh, she skims into the little room beyond which serves as dressing room and bath room. A minute afterward and there ensues a splashing of cold water and then: "Why are you wandering here, I pray? An old man asked a maid, one day." For, like a canary, Kitty must take her bath to music, and as the full, round voice gives out its song of youth and hope, there is something more than usually joyous that causes Mary, who is on her knees at the wardrobe in the next room, to pause at her work of selecting a gown, and look toward the door with a smile of sympathy which has not quite disappeared when Kitty, with roses on her cheeks and a soft gleam in her eyes, comes in, the embodiment of youth and graceful strength. "Making a selection, Mary. Arduous work to decide between two dresses that are fit for little and three that are fit for nothing."

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The Power

The raging hurricane howled, whirling the blinding with terrible force. Christmas near, and its messenger had a No one was about in the settle all were indoors, for the storm so violent, and the weather so that the comfortable, crackling fire was the most inviting, and but those whose urgent duties them would venture out. In the village store some dozen were assembled, and seated in a circle, hugging the cheerful stove, and they discussed what judging from their faces and manner, of grave importance. These especially, a great hunking low of over seventy, with big head and mustache, was speaking a serious voice, and the other, with an intension that suggested their deep interest in what was saying. "Lads, somethin' hev 't be. We can't let the poor creatures to death, away from all help, there's a man left 't go. 'Tis duty, men. Their men would be same for us, you all know. We go too long, that's the trouble, should ha' gone when 't stormed. Now 't trail is covered, 'tis a hard tramp and dangerous someone hev 't go! My God, surely ye wouldn't let 'em starve to death, and it almost mas,—will be in two days! H no hearts? Don't ye mind th' ol' Jake Bursey went to Injun just 't save one man's life? 'Tis well nigh as bad as 't-day. As LeShane, an' Mose Driscoll, an' r Caldwell—what would they lads? Would they let the worst Bear Ground starve at Christmas? Nobody answered him. As he searched at them, they red him half defiantly, and it was his words had not changed minds. "Well y' know, Big Bill," said slowly, "'tis reely too bad 't go 't trail in this storm. We'd do it! we'd hev 't turn back afto went a mile! Why, man, we co keep the trail!" "That's right," said another, nodding his head at the others, he pointed his pipe stem at the outside, "an' ef we did go, how we get supplies along? 'Tis couldn't haul in that storm!" "But yes they could," contra Big Bill, "an' ye know it! Ex like they ar' no good!" "Oh, we don't want 't give exc snapped one of the men, "we' goin' so there's an end on it! ef ye're so eager, why don't ye start!" "You know I'm too old, Sam B answered Big Bill, quickly. "If a young man 'd go, an' without 't forced! You know that." "Just then the door opened, and entered to his eyes in snow, a new er entered the shop, a big bla snow blowing in the door as he opened. He shook the snow fro clothes, stamped his feet, and o' ally bade them a "Merry Christmas!" "Why, 'tis Jim Blake, sure o' alive!" exclaimed Big Bill, ste over to him. "Why lad, when do get here?" shaking his hand he while the others greeted him al "Hello, boys; all here? Just a now. Pretty bad outside, eh? 'Tis the kind of day to wake u Bill! What are you all doing yourselves, hugging the stove?" "There you are, lads, Jim has from Injun Camp in 't storm. I'm sure 't he could come from, by his self, a party of ye could Bear Ground!" "What's that about Bear G asked Jim Blake, quickly, turni Big Bill. "What do you want to go there for?" "Why, haven't ye heard?—but I got ye just got here. Well, they no supplies there. Had none. 'Tis storm started a week ago, a' began, an' 't held up until it ped. Instead, it's got worse, an' food is not gone yet!" "What, you don't mean to tel they're without food? Not hu surely?" asked Jim quickly, a expression on his face. "That's what I do mean!" re Big Bill, grimly. "They have ate there, as you know they get supplies from us, an' 't party was goin' when 't storm began ate them. Th' men there are at the mill up country, an' except

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