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### A Prince of Sinners

By E. Phillips Oppenheim  
Author of "The Traitor," "The Sinner," "A Millionaire's Yesterdays," Etc.

#### Chapter IX., Continued.

"Thank you," Mary said, hardly. "I am sorry, but I must decline your offer—absolutely. Now, let us go, shall we?"

She would have risen but he laid his hand firmly upon her shoulder. "Not till I have had some sort of explanation," he said. "Is it that you do not care for me, Mary?"

She turned around on him with a strange color in her cheeks and an angry light in her eye.

"You might have spared me that also," she exclaimed. "You are determined to humiliate me, to make me remember that hateful afternoon after tea in my rooms—oh, I can say it if I like—when I kissed you. I knew then that sooner or later you would make up your mind that it was your duty to ask me to marry you. Only you might have done it by letter. It would have been kinder. Never mind. You have purged your conscience, and you have had your answer. Now let us go."

Brooks looked at her for a moment amazed—beside himself with wonder and self-reproach.

"Mary," he said quietly, "I give you my word that nothing which I have said this evening has the least connection with that afternoon. I give you my word that for a moment have I thought of it in connection with what I have said to you tonight."

She looked at him steadfastly, and her eyes were full of things which he could not understand.

"When did you make up your mind to ask me this?"

He pointed to the little table where they had been sitting.

"Only a few minutes ago. I confessed it was an impulse. I think I realized as we sat there how dear you had become to me—how dear our dull life was without you."

"You say these things to me," she exclaimed, "when all the time you love another woman."

He started a little. She smiled bitterly as she saw the shadow on his face.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," she said, deliberately—"that you love Sybil Caroom. Is it not true?"

His head dropped a little. He had never asked himself even so much as this. He was face to face now with all the concentrated emotions which lately had so much disturbed his life. The problem which he had so sedulously avoided was forced upon him ruthlessly, with almost barbaric simplicity.

"I do not know," he answered rather vaguely. "I have never asked myself. I do not wish to ask myself. Why do you speak of her? She is not of our world, the world to which I want to belong. I want to forget her."

"You are a little mad tonight, my friend," Mary said. "Tomorrow you will feel differently. If Sybil Caroom cares for you, what does it matter to which world she belongs. She is not the sort of girl to be bound by old-fashioned prejudices. But I do not understand you at all tonight. You are a little cruel."

"Cruel?"

Her face darkened.

"Oh, it is only natural," she said, with a note of suppressed passion in her low tone. "It is just the accused egotism of your sex. What right have you to make me suffer so—to ask me to marry you—and sit by my side and wonder whether you care for another woman? Can't you see how humiliating it is? It is an insult to ask a woman to make you a home to settle your indecision. It is an insult to ask a woman to marry you except for the reason that you care for her more than you care for any other woman in the world, and can tell her so truthfully, eagerly. Please to put me in a cab at once and never speak of these things again."

She was half way across the lawn before he could stop her. He had thrown back, carrying herself proudly and well, moving as it seemed to him, with a sort of effortless dignity wholly in keeping with the vigor of her words. He obeyed her literally. There was nothing else for him to do. His slight effort to join her in her hand and speaking a few cheerful words of thanks for her evening's entertainment. And when the cab rolled away Brooks felt lonelier than ever.

Minard's Liniment Lumberman's Friend.

#### CHAPTER X

Lady Sybil Says "Yes."

The carriage plunged into the shadow of the pine woods, and commenced the long uphill ascent to Saalburg. Lady Caroom put down her parasol, and turned towards Sybil, whose eyes were steadfastly fixed upon the narrow white belt of road ahead.

"Now, Sybil," she said, "for our talk."

"Your talk," Sybil corrected her, with a smile. "I'm to be the listener."

"Oh, it may not be so, one sided after all," Lady Caroom declared. "And we had better make haste, or that impetuous young man of yours will come pounding after us on his motor before we know where we are. What are you going to do about him, Sybil?"

"I don't know."

"Well, you'll have to make up your mind. He's getting on my nerves. You must decide one way or another."

Sybil sighed.

"It's quite the nicest young man I know—of his class," she remarked.

"Exactly," Lady Caroom assented. "And though I think you will admit that I am one of the least conventional of mothers, I must really say I don't think that it is exactly a comfortable thing to do to marry a man who is altogether outside one's own circle."

"Mr. Brooks," Sybil said, "is quite as well bred as Atherstone."

"He is his equal in breeding and in birth," Lady Caroom declared. "You know all about him. I admit, she continued, "that it sounds like a page out of a novel. But it isn't. The only pity is from one point of view—that it makes so little difference."

"You think," Sybil asked, "that he will really keep his word—that he will not be willing to be reconciled to Lord Arranmore?"

"I am sure of it, my dear," Lady Caroom answered. "Unless a miracle happens he will continue to be Mr. Kingstone Brooks for the next ten or fifteen years. Lord Arranmore's lifetime, and you know they are a long lived race. So you see the situation remains practically unaltered by what I have told you. Mr. Kingstone Brooks is a great favorite of mine. I am very fond of him indeed. But I very much doubt—even if he should ask you—whether you would find your position as his wife particularly comfortable. You and I, Sybil, have no secrets from one another. I wish you would tell me exactly how you feel about him."

Sybil smiled—a little ruefully.

"If I knew—exactly," she answered, "I should know exactly what to do. But I don't. You know how uninteresting our set of young men are as a rule. Well, directly I met Mr. Brooks at Enton I felt that he was different. He interested me very much. Then I have always wanted to do something useful—to get something into my life, and he found me exactly the sort of work I wanted. But he has never talked to me as though he cared particularly—though I think he does a little."

"It is easy to see," Lady Caroom remarked, "that you are not head over heels in love."

"Mother," Sybil answered, "do you believe that girls often do fall head over heels in love? If Mr. Brooks and I met continually, and if he and his father were reconciled, well, I think it would be quite easy for me to become very fond of him. If even now he had followed me here, was with us often and showed that he would be inclined to return it—perhaps even—I don't know—to risk marrying him and giving up our ordinary life. But as it is I like to think of him, I should like him to be here; but I am not, as you say, head over ears in love with him."

"And now about Atherstone?" Lady Caroom said.

"Well, Atherstone has improved a great deal," Sybil answered thoughtfully. "There are a great many things about him which I like very much. He is always well dressed and fresh and bright. He enjoys himself without being dissipated and he is perfectly natural. He is rather boyish perhaps, but then he is young. He is not afraid to laugh and I like the way he enters into everything. And I think I like his persistence."

"As his wife," Lady Caroom said, "you would have immense opportunities for doing good. He has a great deal of property in London, besides three huge estates in Somerset."

"That is a great consideration," Sybil said, earnestly. "I shall always be thankful that I met Mr. Brooks. He made me think in a practical way of things which have always troubled

me a little. I should hate to seem thoughtless or ungrateful to him. When you tell me something, mother?"

"Of course."

"Do you think that he cares—at all?"

"I think he does a little."

"Enough to be reconciled with his father for my sake?"

"No! Not enough for that," Lady Caroom answered.

Sybil drew a little breath.

"I think," she said, "that that decides me."

The long ascent was over at last. They pulled up before the inn, in the front of which the proprietor was already executing a series of bows. Before they could descend the never again familiar stairs from behind and a young man in a grey flannel suit and Panama hat, jumped from his motor and came to the carriage door.

"Don't be awfully cross!" he exclaimed, laughing. "You know you half promised to come with me this afternoon, so I couldn't help having a spin out to see whether I could catch you. Won't you allow me, Lady Caroom? The step is a little high."

"It isn't any use being cross with you," Sybil remarked. "It never appears to make any impression."

"What a terribly thick-skinned," he answered, "when I don't want to understand. Will you ladies have some tea, or come and see how the restoration is getting on?"

"We were proposing to go and see what the German Emperor's idea of a Roman camp was," Sybil answered. "Oh, you can't shake me off now, can you, Lady Caroom?" he declared, appealing to her. "Well, consider it an accident that you found me here, if you like, but it is in a reality a piece of good fortune for you."

"And why, may I ask?" Sybil inquired, with uplifted eyebrows.

"Oh, I'm an authority on this place—come here nearly every day to give the director—as he calls himself—a few hints. Come along, Lady Caroom. I'll show you the baths and the old part of the outer wall."

Lady Caroom very soon had enough of it. She sat down upon a tree and brought out her sketchbook.

"Give me a quarter of an hour, please," she begged, "no longer. I want to be home for tea."

They strolled off. Atherstone turning a little nervously to Sybil.

"I say, we've seen the best part of the ruins," he remarked. "The renovation's hideous. Let's go in the woods—and I'll show you a squirrel's nest."

Sybil hesitated. Her thoughts for a moment were in confusion. Then she sighed once and turned towards the woods.

"I have never seen a squirrel's nest—is it far?"

Lady Caroom put her sketch book away as she heard their approaching footsteps and looked up. Atherstone's eyes came straight over to her.

"You'll give her to me, won't you?" he exclaimed. "Pon my word, she shall be the happiest woman in England if I can make her so. I'm perfectly certain that I am the happiest man."

Lady Caroom pressed her daughter's hand and they all turned to descend the hill.

"Of course I'm charmed," Lady Caroom said. "Sybil makes me feel so elderly. But I don't know what I shall do for a chaperon now."

Atherstone laughed.

"I'm your son-in-law," he said. "I can take you on."

Sybil shook her head.

"No, you won't," she declared. "The only woman I have ever been really jealous of is my mother. She has a way of absorbing all the attention from every one when she is around. I am not going to have her begin with you."

"I feel," Atherstone said, "like the man who married a twin—said he never tried to tell the difference, you know, when a pal asked him how he picked out his own wife."

"If you think," Sybil said, severely, "that you have made any arrangements of that sort I take it all back. You are going to marry me if you behave yourself."

"He sighed.

"Three months is a beastly long time," he said.

Lady Caroom drove back alone. The motor whizzed by her half way down the hill—Sybil holding her hat with both hands and her hat blowing about, and her cheeks pink with pleasure. She waved her hand gaily as she went by and then clutched her hat again. Lady Caroom watched them until they were out of sight, then she found herself looking steadfastly over the valley to the belt of pine clads hills beyond. She could see nothing very clearly and there was a little choking in her throat. They were both there—father and son. Once she fancied that at last he was holding out his arms to her—she sat up in the carriage with a little cry which was half a sob. When she drove through the hotel gates it was he who stood upon the steps to welcome her.

CHAPTER XI  
Brooks Hears the News.

Unchanged! Her first eager glance into his face told her that. Waxen white, his lips stilled that courteous greeting upon her, his tone was measured and cold as ever. She set her teeth as she rose from her seat and gathered her skirts in her hand.

"You, too, a pilgrim?" she exclaimed. "I thought you preferred salt water."

"We had a pleasant fortnight's outing," he answered. "Then I went with Henniub to Wiesbaden and I came on here to see you."

"Have you met Sybil and Atherstone?" he asked gravely.

"Come into my room," she said. "I will give you some tea. These young people are sure to have it on the terrace. I will join you when I have got rid of some of this dust."

He was alone for ten minutes.

At the end of that time she came out through the folding doors with the old smile upon her lips and the old listlessness in her movements. He rose and watched her until she had settled down in her low chair.

"So Sybil is going to marry Atherstone!"

"Yes. He really deserves it, doesn't he? He is a very nice boy."

Arranmore shrugged his shoulders.

"What an everlasting fool Brooks is," he said in a low tone.

"He keeps his word," she answered. "It is a family trait; with you, Arranmore. You are all stubborn, all self-willed, self-centred, selfish!"

"Thank you!"

"You can't deny it!"

"I won't try. I suppose it is true. Besides I want to keep you in a good humor."

"Do tell me why?"

"If Brooks is going to be married, you can't live alone."

"I won't admit that, but what about it? Do you know of a nice respectable companion?"

"Myself."

"She shook her head.

"You may be nice," she answered, "but you certainly are not respectable."

"I am what you make me," he answered in a low tone. "Catherine! A moment ago you accused me of stubbornness. What about yourself?"

"Yes, you. You have been the only woman of my life. You are fresh, you know there is no other man who could make you happy as I could, yet you will not come to me—for the sake of an idea. If I am heartless and callous, an infidel, an egotist, whatever you choose, at least I love you. You need not fear me. You will always be safe."

She shook her head.

"Arranmore," she said, "this is painful to me. Do let us cease to discuss it. I have tried to make you understand how I feel. I cannot alter. It is impossible!"

"You tempt me," he cried, "to play the hypocrite."

"No, I do not, Arranmore," she answered gently, "for there is no acting in this world which would deceive me."

"You do not doubt that I should make you a good husband?"

"I believe you would," she answered, "but I dare not try it."

"And this is the woman," he murmured sadly, "who calls me stubborn."

"Tea was brought in. Afterwards they walked in the gardens together. The band was playing and they were surrounded on all sides by acquaintances. A great personage stopped and talked to them for a while. Lady Caroom admitted the news of Sybil's engagement. After that every one stopped to express pleasure. It was not until the young people appeared themselves and at once monopolized all attention, that Arranmore was able to draw his companion away into comparative solitude."

"Do you by any chance correspond with Brooks?" he asked her.

"She shook her head.

"No!" she answered. "I was thinking of that. I should like him to know from one of us. Can't you write him, Arranmore?"

"I could," he answered, "but it will perhaps come better from you. Have you ever had any conversation with him, about Sybil?"

"Once," she answered, "yes!"

"Then you can write it will be better for you to write. I should like to ask you a question if I may."

"Yes."

"Have you any idea whether the news will be in any way a blow to him?"

"I think perhaps it may," she admitted.

Arranmore was silent. She watched him with eagerness, hoping for some look, some expression of sympathy. She was disappointed. His face did not relax. It seemed almost to grow harder.

"He has only himself to blame," he said slowly. "But for this ridiculous masquerading his chance was as good as Atherstone's. Quixotism such as his is an expensive luxury."

She shivered a little.

"That sounds hard hearted," she said. "He is doing what he thinks is right."

Then Lord Arranmore told her what he told Brooks himself.

"My son is quite a model young man," he said, "but he is a prig. He thinks too much about what is due to him and wrong about what is due to him—and he values his own judgment too highly. However, I have no right to complain for it is he who suffers, not I. May I dine at your table tonight? I came over alone."

"Certainly."

They were interrupted a few minutes later by Sybil and Atherstone, and a small host of their friends. But in consequence of Lord Arranmore's visit to Homburg, Brooks a few days later received two letters. The first was from Lord Arranmore.

Ritter's Hotel.

"My Dear Mr. Brooks,

"I want to be the first to tell you of Sybil's engagement to the Duke of Atherstone, which took place this afternoon. He has been a very persistent suitor, and he is a great favorite. I think, deservedly, with every one. He will, I am sure, make her very happy."

"I understand that you are still in London. You must find this weather very oppressive. Take my advice and don't overwork yourself. No cause in the world, however good, is worth the sacrifice of one's health."

"I hope that my news will not distress you. You realized, of course, that your decision to remain known, or rather unknown, as Kingston Brooks, made it at some time or other inevitable, and I hope to see a good deal of you when we return to town, and that you will always believe that I am your most sincere friend."

"Catherine Caroom."

Brooks laid the two letters down with a curious mixture of sensations. He knew that a very short time ago he might have considered himself as broken hearted, and he knew that as a matter of fact he was nothing of the sort. He answered Lady Caroom's letter first.

"Dear Lady Caroom,

"It was very kind of you to write to me and to send me the news of Sybil's engagement so promptly. I wish, her most hearty every happiness. After all it is the most suitable thing which could have happened."

"You are right in your surmise. After our conversation I realized quite plainly that under my present identity I could not possibly think of Lady Sybil except as a very charming and a very valued friend. I was therefore, quite prepared for the news which you have sent me."

"I am going for a few days' golf and sea bathing into Devonshire, so don't waste too much sympathy upon me. My best regards to Lady Sybil. Just now I imagine that she is overwhelmed with good wishes but if she will add mine to the number I can assure you and her that I offer them most heartily."

"Yours most sincerely,

"Kingston Brooks."

"P.S.—Have you heard that your friend the Bishop is going to bring a Bill before the House of Lords which will do to exterminate me altogether?"

Lady Caroom sighed for a moment as she read the letter, but immediately after her face cleared.

"After all I think it is best," she murmured, "and Atherstone is such a dear."

(To be Continued.)

BALLINGER TO RESIGN

Taft Will Endeavor to Strengthen His Cabinet.

BEVERLEY, Mass., Aug. 13.—Richard A. Ballinger, United States secretary of the Interior, will resign on September 15. Certain events following incidents of the last week or so, lead to the conclusion that a complete political readjustment in circles close to President Taft is in progress.

The resignation of Richard A. Ballinger, secretary of the Interior of the United States, has been expected and predicted for some time. Ballinger's administration has been a stormy one almost from its very inception, and during his term of office he has incurred the hostility of the other, have been rife. The hardest criticism directed against the Taft cabinet.

Ballinger's troubles began when Chief Forester of the United States, Gifford Pinchot, resigned his office, claiming that Ballinger was encroaching on his territory in Alaska and Washington over to the moved in Gifford Pinchot's syndicate was the head. Later the Morgan interests were also brought into the matter.

Accusations back and forth followed this, the people at large generally siding with Pinchot. Then came the Glavis charges. Glavis a subordinate in the department, resigned, claiming that Ballinger was in league with the land grafters in the northwest. He gave his story to Collier's Weekly. His account created a sensation. An investigation followed, or what purported to be one. President Taft applied the whitewash brush to Ballinger.

Like a thunderclap came the climax some months later, when before a senatorial inquiry, a stenographer in Ballinger's office went to the Cleveland Press and signed a sworn statement that President Taft's exoneration.

Ritter's Hotel.

"Dear Mr. Brooks,

"The news which I believe Lady Caroom is sending you today may perhaps convince you of the folly of this masquerading. I make you, therefore the following offer. I will leave England for at least five years on condition that you henceforth take up

your proper position in society and consent to such arrangements as Mr. Ascoug and I may make. In any case I was proposing for myself a somewhat extensive scheme of travel, and the opportunity seems to me a good one for you to dispense with an income which may lead you some day into even worse complications. I trust that for the sake of other people you may be brought into contact with you will accept the arrangement which I propose."

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Collision at Falls

Dangerous Smash Near The Whirlpool Rapids

NIAGARA FALLS, N. Y., Aug. 15.—In a head-on collision between two trolley cars on the Gorge route this evening, nine persons were injured, one seriously. The collision occurred at Swift Drift, at the point in the gorge where the river breaks into the swift rapids above the whirlpool. The ledge upon which the tracks rest is narrow and on the riverside there is a sheer drop of twenty feet into the churning waters. Both cars were shattered by the terrific force of the collision, but neither left the rails.

The injured are: Charles Vaughn, of Niagara Falls, a conductor, condition critical; Mrs. Nellie Melvin, Newark, Ohio; Miss Elizabeth Campbell, Ottumwa, Iowa; Mrs. Gordon, Bowling Green, Ky.; Mrs. Alice Martindale, 463 Manning Ave., Toronto; Mrs. W. H. errett, San Francisco; E. Furman, 550 Main Street, Niagara Falls; Henry Furman, motorman.

The accident was due to the failure of the brake on the going down-river car. At Swift Drift there is a stretch of double track where the up and down river cars meet. The down river car, which left the rails shortly before 6 o'clock, arrived at the double track ahead of schedule time. The motorman applied the air to stop the car but the brake failed to respond. At this time the Lewiston car was coming up the sharp grade from the whirlpool. The motorman on it saw the down-town car approaching at high speed and heard the motorman wildly clanging the gong. Realizing that something was wrong, he reversed power, but before he could bring his car to a stop the runaway car crashed into it. Both cars were completely wrecked.

So near were the cars to the edge of the river that pieces of wreckage fell into the water and were carried down to the whirlpool. A special car brought the injured to Niagara Falls.

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