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'Margaret,' The GIRL ARTIST, OR, The Countess of Ferrers Court.

CHAPTER IV.

"Stay!" said the earl; "our quarrel—if it can be called one—is over. You will oblige me by remaining for one night at least. I do not wish it to be said all over the country that we could not exist for twenty-four hours under one roof, as it will be said if you go at once. Stay, if you please."

"If you wish it, sir, certainly," said Lord Blair, not very joyously. "But I'm afraid I shall bore you dreadfully, you know."

"The boring will be mutual, I have no doubt," said the earl grimly. "I may remind you that we need meet only at dinner."

"That's true," said Lord Blair, frankly. "Well, until then, I'll walk round the place."

The earl inclined his head, and rang the bell which stood at his elbow.

"Lord Leyton will remain here tonight," he said to Larkhall, and that exemplary servant, holding the door open for Lord Blair to pass out, hurried off to tell Mr. Stibbings and Mrs. Hale the extraordinary news that the future earl was to sleep at the house which would some day be his own.

Lord Blair had spent a remarkably bad quarter of an hour; but before he had got half way down the broad staircase, with its carved balustrades and magnificent cross panelling, he began to shake off the effects with that wonderful good-humored carelessness which had lost him nearly all his lands and won him so many hearts.

He went down the stairs into the hall and looked round him with a smile, as if his interview had been of the pleasantest description; then he lit a cigar and, with his hat on the back of his head, went out into the warm sunshine.

He walked along the terrace and across the lawns, and then as if by instinct found his way to the stables. And he remarked, and it is worth noting, that he had not—as many a man in his position would have done—given one glance at the magnificent place with the thought that it would some day all be his.

Strange to say, for an heir, he did not wish the earl dead. Blair Leyton hankered after no man's property, not even his uncle's; whatever sins may

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By making this old-time cough syrup at home you not only save about 82, as compared with the ready-made kind, but you will also have a much more prompt and positive remedy in every way. It overcomes the usual coughs, throat and chest colds in 24 hours—relieves even whooping cough quickly—and is excellent, too, for bronchitis, bronchial asthma, hoarseness and spasmodic croup.

Get from any drug store 2½ ounces of Pinex (50 cents worth), pour it into a 16-ounce bottle and fill the bottle with plain granulated sugar syrup. Follow directions with Pinex. Keeps perfectly and tastes good.

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have been laid to his charge, he was innocent of that love of money which is the root of all evil.

So without a spark of envy or covetousness or ill-will, he went to the stables and, nodding pleasantly to the head groom, went into the stalls.

Of course the man knew who he was—the news had spread all over the Court in five minutes!—and was respectful, and in a second or two more than that; for Blair's manner was as pleasant with high, low, Jack and the game all round.

"Some good horses," he said. The man shook his head doubtfully.

"Some, my lord," he assented. "But not what they ought to be for so big a place—begging your lordship's pardon. You see his lordship the earl only has the carriage horses—and them only once now and again—and there's nobody to ride. I try to keep 'em up, but a man loses heart like, my lord."

"I understand," said Lord Blair, sympathetically. "It's a pity. Such a fine hunting country."

"Ah, isn't it, my lord!" said the man with a sigh. "If the earl 'ud only take the hounds—but there"—and he sighed again.

Lord Blair went up to a big black horse and smacked him, a little attention which the animal responded to by launching out viciously.

"Nice nag!" said Lord Blair, approvingly.

"All but his temper, my lord," said the man. "He's as crooked-minded a hoss as ever I see."

Lord Blair laughed. "He's straight enough in other ways," he said. "Put a saddle on him and I'll take a turn."

The man hesitated a second. "He's an awkward one to ride, my lord," he ventured.

"So I should think," said the young man, cheerfully; "but I like them awkward."

The horse was saddled and brought out, and immediately commenced to verify the character bestowed upon him.

"Ill-tempered dev—beast, I'll take him back, my lord," said the groom; but, with a laugh, Lord Blair got into the saddle, and as the horse reared brought him down in so neat a style that the groom's misgivings fled.

"All right, my lord," he said, with an approving nod.

"Yes, it's all right," said the young man, with another laugh. "He's rather hot just at present, but he'll come back like a lamb, and I shall be hot, I expect," and off he rode.

"There," said the groom to a circle of his helpers, "that's my idea of a young nobleman! There'd be some pleasure and credit in keeping a stable for him."

"What a pity he's such a bad young man," murmured a maid-servant, who had crept out to look on.

"He may be a bad young man," retorted the groom sententiously, "but he's a darned good rider."

"He's dreadfully handsome," said the girl, with a little sigh, as she ran in again, and they unconsciously expressed the general opinion of the two sexes of Blair, Viscount Leyton.

The announcement that the young lord was to remain the night at the Court threw Mrs. Hale into a state of excitement.

"I must see Mr. Stibbings about the lunch and dinner at once, and there's the room to prepare. I shall have to leave you to yourself to-day, my dear," she said to Margaret. "Bless me, if I'd only had an hour or two's notice I could have got something nice for dinner. The earl doesn't care what it is, and often sends the things away untouched; but a young man from London, and used to the dinners they get there at the London clubs, is very different."

"Don't mind me, grandma," said Margaret. "I suppose I can't help you at all!"

"You?—Good gracious me, no!" said the old lady quite pityingly. "Then I'll get my hat and go into the garden," said Margaret.

"Do, my dear; but keep this side of the house, mind, and do not go in front of the earl's windows."

"Very well; I'll take care," laughed Margaret. "I suppose if the earl should happen to catch sight of me twice in one day it would be fatal!—or would he only have a fit?" But Mrs. Hale, fortunately for her, did not hear this.

Margaret went into the garden, and carefully kept out of sight of the great windows. She was very happy, and now and again she would break into song. The garden attached to this wing was a large one, and filled with flowers, and when she came in to lunch she had a large bunch of roses and hellebore and pinks in her hand.

"There was no notice—Do not pick the flowers!" grandma. I hope I haven't been very wicked!"

"No, no, my dear," said Mrs. Hale, who was in a fine state of flurry. "What a beautiful bouquet you have got!"

"Isn't it?" said Margaret, pinning a red rose in the bosom of her dress. "Where shall I put these?" and she looked round for a vase.

"Anywhere you like, my dear. Oh, Margaret, how nice they would be in Lord Leyton's room! It would make it seem more homely like; do what you will, a room that hasn't been used for months does look cold and formal."

"Doesn't it?" agreed Margaret. "And there is nothing like flowers to take off that effect. His lordship is welcome to them; so there they are, grandma."

"Yes, thank you," said Mrs. Hale, hurriedly. "I'll ring for Mary, unless you wouldn't mind running up with them; you'll arrange them decently, while she'll just throw them into a vase."

"Very well. Show me the way, Mary, to Lord Leyton's room," said Margaret as Mary entered.

Mrs. Hale had given him one of the best rooms in the house, and Margaret, who had never seen such an apartment, was lost in admiration of the silken hangings, which stood in place of paper on the walls, and the old and priceless furniture.

She arranged the flowers in a deep-glass dish, and placed it on the spacious dressing table.

"His lordship ought to be pleased, miss," said Mary, shyly, as they were leaving the room.

Margaret laughed. "I daresay he will think them very much in the way and throw them out of the window. I hope he won't throw dish and all," she said.

As she entered Mrs. Hale's sitting-room, she saw Mr. Stibbings approaching.

"I have been looking for you, miss," he said. "I have had a table put in the gallery, as his lordship directed, and his compliments, would you like any blinds put to the windows to shade the light?"

"Grandma, he did mean it, after all," said Margaret, delightedly. "How kind? Oh, thank him, Mr. Stibbings! No, nothing more. I've got a portable case and everything, and the light will do very well. Grandma, I may go now?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said the old lady, absently; "but mind, dear, if you hear the earl coming, you must get up and go away at once."

"Very well," said Margaret, with a smile, and she ran up and got her folding easel and painting materials. Mr. Stibbings wanted to place a footman at her disposal, but she laughingly declined, and with her impudent under her arm, and her paint-box in her hand, she made her way after lunch to the gallery.

"In the future, when I hear any one remark—as proud as a lord, I shall correct them and say—'kind as a lord,'" she said to herself. With all the eagerness of a artist she set up her easel before the picture and commenced at once; and in a few minutes she had become absorbed in her work, and was lost to everything save the burning desire to catch something of the spirit of the great original she was copying.

"It is almost wicked to be so great," she murmured. "How can I do more than like you, you beautiful face?"

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The afternoon glided on unnoticed by her. She heard a great bell booming overhead in a solemn fashion, but she gave it no attention beyond the thought, "the dinner or dressing bell," and went on with her copy.

She was so absorbed that she did not hear some one who had entered the gallery, and it was not until the some one stood close beside her that she knew of his presence.

With a start she looked up, and for a moment saw nothing but a handsome young man in evening dress. His beauty of the manliest type—gave her a pleasant sensation—she was an artist, remember—but the next moment she recognized him.

It was the young man whom she had called a savage, the gentleman who had fought Jem Pyke. Her eyes grew wide and her lips opened, and she sat and stared at him.

As for him, his astonishment equalled and surpassed hers. He had seen her back as he was passing the door of the gallery, and being unable to resist the temptation to ascertain what the face belonging to so graceful a figure was like, he had entered and softly approached her.

Margaret was a beautiful girl, but she was never joveller than when under the spell which falls upon an artist absorbed in her work.

The clear, oval face grew dreamy, the large eyes softer and mystical, the red lips sweeten with suggestful tenderness.

It was the loveliness of the face as well as the recognition of it which struck him—Blair Leyton, of all men—dumb and motionless.

They looked into each other's eyes while one could count fifty, then, with an embarrassment quite novel, he spoke.

"I've disturbed you?"

"No," said Margaret, and the word sounded blunt and cold in his ears. Who could he be, and how did he come here? Yesterday, fighting on the village green, this evening at Leyton Court. Then it flashed upon her: it was Lord Leyton! "No, I didn't hear you," she added.

(To be Continued.)

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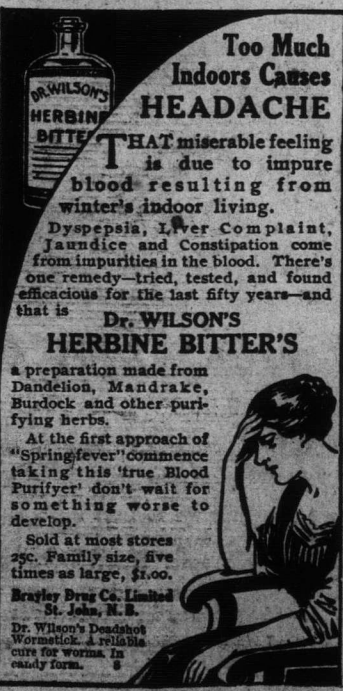
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