

For ECONOMY, no sauce compares with **LEA & PERRINS' SAUCE**

**The Heir to Beecham Park**

CHAPTER XXVIII

Blusterin' March had come round, and gossip had worn to a thread the story of Lady Court's romantic birth. It had seized on the history of Sir Douglas Gerant's long-lost daughter with avidity, for it was not often that society's jaded appetite was regaled with so delightful a morsel. Many things had happened since dull November, but foremost among them were two events—Lord and Lady Court were abroad, to the great annoyance of society, as it was thus barred from beholding her ladyship in person, and the engagement between Stuart Crosbie, heir to Crosbie Castle, and Miss Vane Charteris, his cousin, came to an abrupt and strange termination just as the congratulations were pouring in the many reasons were given in strict confidence for this unsatisfactory affair. It was averred that Miss Charteris had quarrelled with her aunt, Mrs. Crosbie, and that Stuart, like a dutiful son, had espoused his mother's cause; that cold beautiful Vane refused to become her cousin's wife when she discovered that Beecham Park had passed away from him; and that Miss Charteris had grown tired of her affianced husband. These and numerous other explanations were whispered; but no one knew the truth—none but three people—the cousins themselves and the mistress of Crosbie Castle.

Stuart had not reproached his mother; but his mental suffering caused her much uneasiness and genuine shame. She never knew what took place between Vane Charteris and her son, for Stuart was silent, and her niece left town with her mother for Cannes immediately after the rupture. She felt that Vane must be suffering disappointment, but she could never guess the humiliation, the sullen revenge and anger that were gnawing at her niece's heart. Go where she would, at every turn Vane had Stuart's contemptuous face before her, heard his bitter words, saw herself again as he had shown her, in her true light, dishonorable and despicable. That the marriage should have been broken off was acute disappointment; but the odium she had brought on herself in his eyes was even harder to bear. The malicious spite she had felt toward Margery deepened now into actual hatred; it called her to desperation to know that the village girl should have become so great a person, her equal in birth, her superior by marriage. Poor Lady Charteris was overwhelmed with sorrow at the abrupt termination of her daughter's engagement, and fretted herself to a shadow because of Vane's irritability and peevishness. She lavished all her heart's tenderness on her daughter, hoping and trusting to see her again her spirits; but it was weary work. Vane, crushed by her own deceit and wrongdoing, was rapidly changing into an envious, sour, miserable woman.

Mrs. Crosbie was ignorant of the whole of Vane's cruel falsehoods and insults; and, knowing this, Stuart accepted as truly genuine her proud words of sorrow and vexation for her share in the matter. It had been a startling disclosure to Mrs. Crosbie when she found that Margery Daw

had become the Countess of Court; but, when surprise had died away, she felt unconsciously gratified that her new relative should hold so high a social position, and was even disposed to be friendly toward her, although she had deprived Stuart of Beecham Park. She wrote a courteous note to the young wife when her excitement had cooled, welcoming her as her kinswoman, and offering her warm congratulations.

Margery was in Rome when this letter reached her. She read it through slowly, then, with a faint smile, folded it and put it away. It was not in keeping with her generous nature to bear malice, so she replied to Mrs. Crosbie's epistle with a few words of acknowledgment written in a kindly spirit. Margery received another letter at about the same time which brought a flush of sincere pleasure to her face. It was written by Miss Lawson in the name of the villagers of Hurstley, offering Lady Court warm expressions of affection, respect and esteem from all her old friends, and at the head of the list of names were the signatures of Farmer Bright and his wife; Miss Lawson's own letter explained everything. Just after the news of Margery's parentage was made public to the village, a letter came from Robert Bright, in Australia, from which his mother gathered how unjustly she had wronged Margery in her hasty suspicions; and, eager to make atonement, the good woman had headed the village letter with her name. Robert spoke of returning almost immediately, so Margery's heart was lighter on that score. Miss Lawson's words of joy at her dear child's prosperity and happiness brought tears to Margery's eyes; but they were tears of gratitude and affection, not of pain.

She was strangely peaceful and content now; the memory of Stuart's supposed deception and insults, which had rankled so long in her breast, was gone; she remembered only that his love for her had never faltered. Her girlhood was buried in her short love-dream; she was a woman now, brave and determined to fight the battle of life gallantly to the end. She looked to her husband as a guide and a comforter and he tended her with more than husband's care. A great, true affection had sprung up in her heart for him; he was so tender, so good, so many! In her gratitude for all his thought and care she vowed always to keep a smile for him, while the secret of her love should be locked from his sight forever. Sometimes she would sink into a reverie, then wake, to find his eyes fixed on her with such intensity, such an agony of love and pain in them, that it would startle her; but as she looked the expression would fade and the smile would come, the tender, grave smile that she knew so well. When Mrs. Crosbie's second letter came, begging the earl and countess to pay her a visit, it was he who replied; and, as if divining her secret thoughts he wrote that his wife regretted she was unable to visit Crosbie Castle at present.

They had left the manor almost immediately after Stuart's departure. Lord Court suggested a short tour on the Continent, and Margery eagerly agreed; so they crossed the Channel without delay. But, as the winter slipped away, it occurred to Margery that she should visit her inheritance, Beecham Park. So, bidding farewell to the clear blue skies and the world of delights that had been opened to her, they returned to England.

Beecham Park was a huge, gloomy mansion, so deserted and solitary-looking that, as they drove up the magnificent avenue of chestnuts, Margery involuntarily shuddered. Sir Eustace Gerant had neglected the estate, and, splendid though the building was within, it did not bring the pleasure to its owner that Court Manor had.

"Are you disappointed, my darling?" asked the earl one morning, after watching her carefully. "It is very grand; the grounds and woods are beautiful; but it is not home," she answered, with a sigh. However, there was much to be done—for they found that the steward, who had had sole control of the estate, had neglected his duties most disgracefully; so, placing all authority in the hands of her husband, Margery turned her attention to the village near, burying all regrets and vain hopes that assailed her in untiring work on behalf of her tenants.

It was a weary trial at times, for, though she had courage, her strength would occasionally fail, and her heart would yearn for the love she had lost, but none knew of this struggle but herself—she had learned to control her emotions and smile when the burden was heaviest.

"It's strange with how much power and pride the softness is of love allied. How much of power to force the softness! To be in outward show at rest. How much of pride that never eye may look upon its agony. Ah, little will the lip reveal Of all the burning heart can feel!"

Of Stuart she heard nothing; but she had faith in his courage and manliness, and knew that, once the cloud which overshadowed him had passed, he would fulfill his word and face the world. He was once more her ideal, her hero, and she felt he would not fail in this duty to himself. Engrossed in her thoughts and daily tasks, she did not notice the change that seemed to be coming over the earl. His tenderness never failed, his courtesy and love were never lacking, and she had grown so used to all his thoughtful care that it seemed but the adjunct of everyday life. But she was suddenly awakened from this existence.

The Squire of Crosbie Castle had been one of the first among her new relatives warmly to welcome Margery. He had loved her father, and for his old affection's sake had opened his heart to the young girl; when therefore he learned that the Earl and Countess of Court had returned to England and were staying at Beecham Park, he wrote immediately, expressing a great wish to visit them. To this Margery and her husband replied with genuine pleasure, begging the squire to come as soon as possible.

Margery found a warm love spring up in her breast for Stuart's father, and the earl and the squire soon became good friends. It was the squire who called Margery's attention to Lord Court's quiet manner and worn appearance, as they were talking together one morning. Margery listened with a sense of regret and remorse at her blindness, and, making some excuse, she left the squire in the grounds where they had been sauntering and hurried back to the house.

It was a glorious spring day; the sunshine illuminated the old mansion, darting in golden shafts through the long, narrow windows. Margery crossed the hall, above which was seen a massive dome and round which ran the gallery leading to the upper apartments and bedrooms. Several servants were hurrying to and fro; and, asking for the earl, she learned that he was in the study, busy with the new steward.

Without hesitation she made her way to the room and opened the door. The earl was alone, leaning his head upon his hand, reading some papers which lay on the table.



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My ground with true love may be tended, my space may be lovely and fair. The food I provide may be plenty, but there's never a mountain side there; And were I by the kindest people set down where but strangers go by, Though they lavish affection upon me, I know I should wither and die.

The bright rhododendrons will flourish on the side of the mountains and hills. With the spruces and pines for their neighbors and the songs of the "Rivers and rills"; And I know now the cause of my failure, why I lose all the plants which I buy. Homestick and heart-heavy they wither for they want what I cannot supply.

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