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THE HEIR OF Lancewood

CHAPTER XIV.

"No," he replied, "but allow me to say, Sir Arthur, that Lady Neslie is one of the most extraordinary patients I have ever attended."

The baronet smiled. "I believe it," he said. "Lady Neslie has a great dread of illness, doctor. I am glad you think there is nothing very wrong. Would you advise change of air?"

"No; let her rest and live more quietly—have less gayety and keep earlier hours—she will soon be well then."

The doctor might have thought her ladyship a wonderful patient if he had seen her as she appeared after he left her. She was standing by the fire, a flush on her face, her eyes flashing, her red lips curved in a strange smile.

"Can it be true?" she said to herself. "Is my prayer really answered? Can it be true? I will not say a word to them until I am quite sure. And, if the doctor does—but he will not—he dares not, now that I have forbidden him. Can it be that my prayer is granted? Now for my victory—now for my revenge! There shall be Lady Valerie's Drive without asking Miss Neslie's consent. Miss Neslie will not always be able to sneer at me—to look at me with calm, proud eyes, as though I were immeasurably inferior to her. She will not be able to live at the Abbey while I am sent from its doors. She will not be consulted again, while I am told indifferently that it is upon business I do not understand. Farewell to Miss Neslie's heirship and grandeur if this be true! But I will keep my secret yet awhile."

"You are better, Valerie," said Sir Arthur, entering the room and going up to her. "You have found some of your roses again. I was terribly frightened about you."

"I was frightened myself," she admitted, laughingly; "but I am better now."

"Now, Valerie," said her husband, "you must listen to reason. I know you will not be willing to submit to what I am going to say, but I must enforce obedience. You must live more quietly—you must keep earlier hours—you must get out less. Why, we never have a quiet day at home. You have carried your love of gayety a little too far, and you have made yourself quite ill."

To his surprise, she received the

little lecture very meekly. "You are right," she returned—"I see my folly, and I mean to be different. You shall see that I will follow your advice, Arthur."

"What a docile little wife! You may develop into a patient Griselda soon, Valerie."

To his great surprise, he found that she kept her word. She refused half the invitations that came. She said nothing more about giving dances or balls. She was delighted with the change; even Vivien was compelled to acknowledge the improvement. Lancewood became more like itself again. Later on Sir Arthur proposed going to London for a short period, but to his intense surprise Valerie resolutely declined.

"You may go if you like," she said. "I have had enough of gayety; I want to be quiet at home."

"I shall not leave you," declared Sir Arthur. "London has no attraction for me—I would far rather be at Lancewood. But there is Vivien, she ought to have a change."

It happened most fortunately that the difficulty was soon solved. Lady Smeaton was about to visit town, and hearing that the Baronet and Lady Neslie wished Vivien to go, but were unable to accompany her, she invited Miss Neslie to join herself and her daughters; and Vivien consented. Then, when the golden promise of summer filled the land, Lady Neslie told her husband the secret she had been keeping from him; and the secret was, that before many months had passed, there would be given to her the sweetest gift Heaven can give—the gift of a little child.

CHAPTER XV.

Sir Arthur did not feel quite sure whether his wife's intelligence pleased him or not. Still he said nothing to that effect to her, but bent down and kissed her pretty face, and muttered something about happiness. It was vague enough, yet it pacified her. She was quite content.

Was he pleased? If he should have a son, his beautiful, noble daughter would no longer be heiress of Lancewood. She would never fill the position for which she had so well qualified herself. Her life would be completely spoiled. Sir Arthur understood her, and he knew that her desire to inherit Lancewood was not so much for the wealth or the importance that would accrue to her, but because she had lofty ideas of adding to the luster of her name, of doing good to all on the estate—because she would carry out needful improvements for which he had no inclination. He had often said to himself what a noble mistress Vivien would make for Lancewood, and had thought himself most fortunate in having such a daughter to succeed him. Now, if he should have a son, all hopes of Vivien's succession were of course ended. He could give her an ample fortune, but he knew her well. No fortune or money could compensate her for the loss of Lancewood. He knew that she would rather be mistress of Lancewood than Queen of England. It would be a terrible blow to her. The bringing home of a young wife had been bad enough, but that would seem trivial in comparison with the loss of Lancewood.

Another thing—if he had a son, it was almost improbable that he could live to see him reach manhood, and, if he did not, who would train him—who would teach him all that Vivien had so aptly learned? He did not say so to his wife, but in the depths

of his heart Sir Arthur hoped that a little daughter might be born to them and not a son. If that were the case, the evil would be changed into a blessing. A daughter could be amply portioned out of the estate, and would not interfere with Vivien's claims.

He did not tell Vivien the news. "It will be time enough for her to know it," he said to himself, "when all the world knows it."

Vivien wrote to say that when the Smeatons left London they were going to Germany, and had asked her to accompany them, which she very much wished to do. Sir Arthur gave his consent.

"Who knows, poor child, to what kind of home she may return?" he said. "It may have passed from her hands never to be entirely her own again."

So Vivien went to Germany, little dreaming of the news that would follow her thither.

Lady Neslie was expecting the hour of her triumph. She had never admitted to herself that she might have a daughter instead of the son she longed and prayed for. Any one hinting ever so remotely at such an idea incurred her severest displeasure.

One day she summoned Mrs. Spenser, the housekeeper, to a consultation. She wanted to know which of the rooms had been used as Miss Neslie's nursery. Mrs. Spenser told her "the large room, with the oval window, on the first floor."

"That will not do for me," said her ladyship, decidedly. "I prefer a room on the ground-floor. Stairs are always dangerous for children, and boys are so much more mischievous than girls."

"But," interrupted the housekeeper, incautiously, "your ladyship might have a daughter."

"I shall have nothing of the kind," said Lady Neslie, angrily; "my son will be heir of Lancewood—a daughter would be—'" "Useless to me," she was about to add, but prudence came to her aid and checked the words.

The housekeeper went away with a smile on her face. "It is easy to see," she said, "that milord wants a son, so that Miss Neslie shall not have Lancewood. I pray to Heaven she may be disappointed."

Lady Neslie herself never seemed to have a doubt.

"Arthur," she said one day to her husband, "I have been looking over the family annals, and I have found a name for my little son."

"Indeed! What name have you chosen?" he asked.

"Oswald. It seems to have been a favorite name in the family. I counted ten Oswalds, and they all seem to have been famous men."

"Yes," observed Sir Arthur, dreamily—"Oswald is a famous name with us, and we have had some gifted men called by it. If I had a son, I could not wish for a better name for him. I often wonder, if I had another name, whether it would have inspired me to be a greater man."

He spoke regretfully, like one who felt that he had missed some road in life; then, suddenly looking at his wife, he said—

"Valerie, you make very sure of this son of yours. What if, after all you should find yourself the mother of a little daughter as pretty as you are yourself?"

She looked up at him excitedly. "I should be so terribly disappointed," she said, "that I should almost hate her."

"Hush, Valerie!" he cried, shocked at her words.

She perceived her imprudence. "It is your fault, Arthur—you make me say what I do not mean. My whole heart is bent upon a little son. Why do you contradict me?"

Indeed, it was useless, as he well knew. He said no more, but he hoped and prayed with all the fervor of his soul that the expected child might not be a son and heir.

There was great consternation one evening—a sweet dewy evening—for the young mistress of Lancewood was suddenly taken ill. The doctor was summoned in haste, and he sent at once for another. There was distress and dismay for Lady Valerie was sick unto death, and it seemed a terrible thing that one so young and beautiful should die.

There was long hours of suspense, when the doctors consulted with grave faces, and the servants whis-

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pered in low voices. "It would be strange," the latter said, "if this Lady Neslie too should die;" and there were hundreds of wishes expressed that no son might deprive Miss Neslie of her birthright.

Sir Arthur, walking up and down the broad corridors, tried to understand his own heart, and failed. Then they came to him, those grave-faced doctors, and told him that he had great cause for rejoicing—a son and heir was born to him—a strong, healthy boy. But there was one drawback—Lady Neslie was in great danger. He asked if he could see her; and they told him "Not yet—she was too ill."

A son was born to him! When the doctors had gone away, leaving him alone, he went to the window that looked over the Hyde woods. The moon was rising over the trees, the sky was without a cloud. The fair domain of Lancewood looked unwontedly fair. The undulating, well-wooded park, the hills in the far distance, the dark picturesque masses of trees, the moonlight silvering all—it was a home for man to be proud of and to love.

A son was born to him! This fair domain would never be his daughter's—it would never belong to her; it belonged now to the little child whom he had not seen, and Vivien was disinherited. As he stood there her thought of his first wife—Vivien's mother—of how, during her short life, she had talked of the time when her daughter would inherit Lancewood. He thought of Vivien and of how she had spent her life. She had not cared for romance or sentiment; the light, pretty occupations of other girls had had no charm for her. She had fitted herself to be mistress of Lancewood, as she would have done to be queen of a great kingdom. He could remember her enthusiasm over the grand old trees. How she had loved them! How she had gloried in the fact that, although they might die of old age, they could never be cut down! He remembered as he stood there watching the fair domain that was not to be hers, how she had planned a picturesque bridge to span the river, and a boat house lower down. Now she would never plan again. Tears dimmed his eyes, partly in gratitude for the son born to him, and partly in sorrow for the daughter who had lost all through his birth.

Then he reproached himself. It was too late, he said, for thoughts of that kind—too late for regret; he was married, and a son was born; there was nothing to be done but make the best of it.

Soon afterward he saw the little babe—a strong, healthy boy, with his mother's eyes and hair—a bonny, beautiful boy—and his heart warmed to the child.

"After all, there will be some satisfaction in being succeeded by a son," he thought; "this boy will be Sir Oswald Neslie of Lancewood."

He stooped down to kiss the tiny rose-bud face and then he went quietly to his wife's room.

She looked so ill and weak. She had fainted, they told him, two or three times in succession, but she recognized him now, and called him by name.

"Arthur," she said, faintly, as he bent over her, "they will not let me speak; they will not tell me."

He saw her face flush with triumph, ill as she was.

"A son, heir to Lancewood—I am so glad!" she whispered. Then, looking into his earnest face, she said—"I shall not die, Arthur; I shall live now that I have a son."

Then he left her, and she lay still, saying to herself over and over again—

(To be Continued.)

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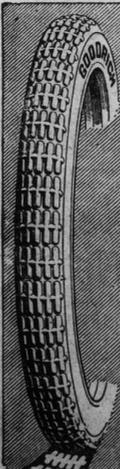
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LATEST

From the Front

Messages Received
Previous to 9 a.m.

OFFICIAL.

LONDON, July 28.
The Governor, Newfoundland.
The French Government report a captured position at Hingekopf in Vosges, consolidated and extended. Several hundred prisoners were taken.

The Russian Government report successful counter attacks on the banks of the Narw between Vico and Bug, and north of Grubiesko. Enemy forces have crossed Bag the Sokal region.

The Italian Government report the battle continues in the Isonzo front on Carso Plateau. A strong position was captured but owing to cross fire the Italians retreated to point beneath the crest, where they maintain themselves. Progress has been made in the centre and on the right. A position on the South Carso ridge, has been captured. 3,200 prisoners were taken during the day.—BONAI LA W.

PREMIER ASQUITH'S SPEECH AND SIR HENRY DALZIELL'S CRITICISM.

LONDON, July 28.
The war has become, and is likely to continue for some time, a contest of endurance. Premier Asquith, in the Commons this afternoon, was making a general review in moving the adjournment of Parliament to-morrow until September 14th.

The Premier remarked: "We shall be ungrateful and insensitive if we did not recognize at this moment the indescribable gallant efforts that are being made by our Russian Allies to stem the tide of invasion, and retain inviolate the integrity of our possessions. I do not think in the whole of military history there has been a more magnificent example of discipline and endurance and of individual and collective initiative than has been shown by the Russian Army in the last seven weeks."

"Our new allies in Italy are steadily gaining ground, making their progress towards the objective, which, we believe, in a very short time, will be within their reach."

The Premier declared that the British Government's confidence in the results in the Italian operations was undiminished.

He also emphasized his confidence in the unity of both the French and British armies engaged in the Western field.

Referring to the fact that this week would see the completion of a year of war, Mr. Asquith remarked that the world never had seen a miraculous transformation in a country, not in spirit and heart, in the outward manifestations of a life, that had taken place here in those twelve months.

The British fleet to-day was stronger, the Premier continued, in the beginning of the war, and its quiet and unobserved, but illustrious and all-powerful activity, in the fact that the seas are clear, substantially clear. "For, after all," said the Premier, "this submarine menace, serious as it has appeared, is not going to inflict fatal or substantial injury on British trade. We have our supplies of food and raw materials upon which we and the rest of the country depend, floating in upon the same abundance and with the same freedom, and, I may say, without much exaggeration, judging of insurance rates and other matters."

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