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**For Love of a Woman; New Romeo and Juliet.**

CHAPTER XVIII  
FASHIONING THE WEB.

She snatched her hand away impatiently, and drawing her handkerchief over the spot his lips had touched, said:

"You appear conspicuously cheerful, to-night. May one enquire the reason? Don't trouble to tell me if you are not sure it will be interesting. I am quite bored enough already," and she moved her fan with a weary gesture.

"Bored, dear lady?" he murmured, smoothing his long, yellow hair from his forehead. "Now, really! And I am never bored! But then I am always busy; I never permit my mind to be unoccupied. Surely one can always find some pleasant and congenial task to lighten the lengthy hours—"

She flashed a scornful look at him from her keen eyes.

"Please don't treat me as if I were the audience at a charity meeting."

"Alas!" he murmured, softly. "Charity meeting ladies do not wear such charming toilettes as this. Would that they did!" And he beamed down admiringly at the magnificent evening-dress.

"What a pity it is that it should be wasted—no, I will not say that—but it is a pity there are not younger eyes to see and admire it than mine and the dear marquis's. Now, if Cecil were here—he has so keen an appreciation for all that is beautiful!" She looked up at him sharply.

"What do you want to tell me about him?" she demanded, quickly, a faint colour coming into her face. "Is he coming back?"

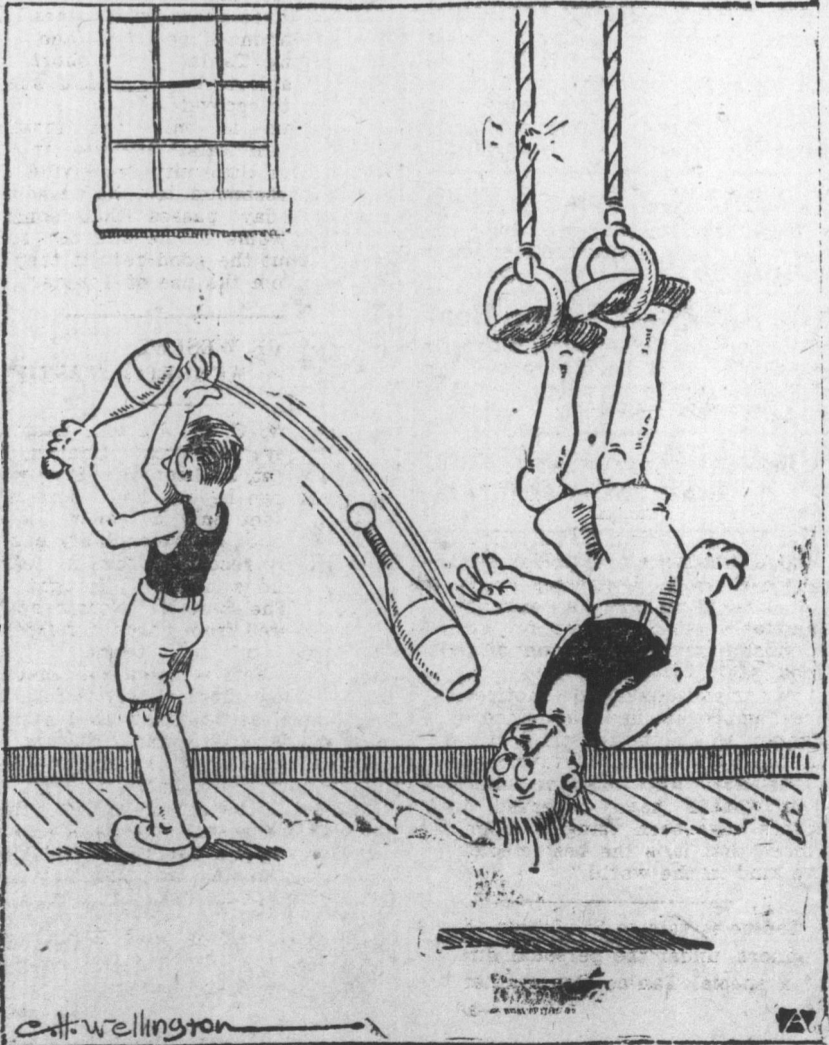
"Is Cecil coming back, dear marquis?" he asked, turning as the door opened and the marquis entered.

The marquis stooped and looked from one to the other under his brows.

"You should know best. The person who sent him to Ireland probably knows when he can come back," he said, with cold contempt.

"Now, now, really I must protest!"

**And the Worst is Yet to Come—**



back and marry this pure and innocent ballet-girl!"

"Actress, actress, dear marquis," cooed Spenser Churchill, folding his hands and smiling, with his head on one side. "If you appeal to me, I am afraid I must be the bearer of bad news."

"Bad news! He is married already!" exclaimed Lady Grace, raising and confronting him with white face and furious eyes.

Spenser Churchill chuckled at her alarm, then, with his head a little more on one side, murmured:

"No, no! I am sorry to say there is a little hitch—ahem!—the fact is the engagement is broken off."

"Broken off?" exclaimed Lady Grace, and her face crimsoned as she leant forward, with scarcely repressed eagerness.

The marquis toyed with the diamond stud at his wrist, and maintained his accustomed air of cold and haughty indifference; but Spenser Churchill's keen eyes detected a slight tremor of the thin, white fingers.

"Y—es! It is very sad, and my heart bleeds for poor Cecil—"

Lady Grace tapped her hand with her fan with impatience, and seeing and recognising it, he went on with still more exasperating slowness.

"Only they who have suffered as he will and must suffer can sympathise with him. To have one's tenderest affections nipped in the bud, to find that one's true and devoted love has been misplaced, and—er—betrayed; ah, how cruel and sharp a torture it is! Poor Cecil! Poor Cecil!"

The fan snapped loudly, its delicate ivory leaves broken on the restless, impatient fingers.

"Can you not tell us what has occurred—the truth, without this—this sermon?" she exclaimed, almost fiercely.

"Yes, pray spare us if you can, Spenser," said the marquis, with a cold smile. "I gather from what you say, that this miserable business has come to an end. Is that so?"

"Yes, is that so?" demanded Lady Grace.

Spenser Churchill heaved a deep sigh, but a faint smile of satisfaction lurked in his half-closed eyes.

"I regret to say that it is," he said. "Poor Cecil's affections have been wasted! The tenderest emotions of his heart betrayed! The young lady has—discarded him!"

The marquis raised his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders; but Lady Grace rose and laid her hand—with no gentle grasp—on Spenser Churchill's arm.

"Is this true?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

"Yes," he said; "I have his dismissal in my hand," and he held up Doris's note.

Lady Grace drew a long breath.

"You—you are very clever!" she said.

He looked at her with an affectation of surprise.

"I—I" he murmured. "I know nothing about it! I happen to know the young lady slightly, and she, not knowing Lord Cecil's address—"

"He must have written to her," broke in Lady Grace.

"Has he, do you think?" responded Spenser Churchill, opening his eyes with a child-like innocence.

Lady Grace smiled.

"I see! I see! You intercepted the letters?"

"I beg your pardon! What did you say? Not knowing Lord Cecil's address, Miss Marlowe committed this letter to my care. Now the question is, shall we send it on to him or wait till he comes back? I think you said he would be back in a week, dear marquis?"

"You said so," said the marquis, coldly.

"Well, in that case, don't you think it would be better to wait until he comes back? Letters do miscarry so, don't they?"

The marquis smiled sardonically.

"I agree with Lady Grace," he said. "You are a clever fellow, Spenser."

"They do miscarry so often," continued Spenser Churchill. "So I think, if you ask me, it will be better to keep it till he returns. That is my humble advice."

The marquis nodded.

"And my humble advice is that you are not here when it is delivered," he said, with a grim smile. "I have no doubt you have taken every precaution; but if Cecil should get an inkling—"

He stopped, and smiled again significantly.

"Dear Cecil!" murmured Spenser Churchill. "I should so like to have

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stayed till he came back, and attempted to soothe and comfort him—marquis smiled more sardonically than before—"but," continued Spenser Churchill, "I am sorry to say important business compels me to return to London to-morrow, so I must leave the letter in your charge. You will take every care of it? Poor Cecil! And you must be very kind and gentle with him, dear Lady Grace."

"We will take every care of it, and Lady Grace will be very kind and gentle, no doubt," restarted the marquis, with a sneer.

**CHAPTER XIX. IN STRANGE SURROUNDINGS.**

Feeling as if the world were quite a new and different one, and she equally new and strange, Doris left Barton the following morning, Mrs. Jeff driving her to the station in a little pony-car, and obviously weeping as the train left the station.

It was not a particularly long journey, and the time passed very quickly, as it seemed to Doris—for she was thinking all the time, dwelling on the past and considering what the future would be like—and when they reached Waterloo she was about to ask a porter for a cab, when a footman came up to the carriage, and, touching his hat, enquired if she were Miss Marlowe.

"The carriage is quite close, miss," he said, with evident respect, after a glance at the slim, graceful, black-clad figure and delicately refined face. "She's a lady, anyhow," was his mental comment.

The carriage was an admirably appointed one, the horses evidently as good as money could buy, and the get-up of the equipage quiet and reserved, corresponding with the dark liveries of the coachman and footman.

They went, at a smart, business-like pace, through the crowded Strand, and, entering the sacred regions of the upper ten, pulled up at one of the largest houses in Chester Gardens.

(To be Continued.)

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