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A Millionaire's Countess Westerleigh.

CHAPTER X. (Continued.)

"You are right. I am a rich man. They say I'm worth a million. I don't know. Perhaps so—perhaps less, perhaps more. And I am your uncle—your mother's brother. Why don't you ask me who I'm going to leave my money to?"

He fixed a piercing gaze on the handsome, debonair face. Vane laughed quite easily.

"I haven't cheek enough for that, sir," he replied. "And, besides, I've no desire to be kicked out of the house. I'm too comfortable."

The answer seemed to please the old man. He grunted and scratched his chin, still eying Vane.

"Oh! you are comfortable, are you?" he said.

"Extremely so," said Vane, with a shake of his head and a slight stretching of his long limbs. "I'll own that I was rather uncomfortable when I discovered that trick you'd played me. I don't think it was quite fair of you to play it so low down on me as to pass yourself off as a servant and allow me to tip you—"

"And to stick to the half-crown," put in the old man, with a grim smile.

"No," said Vane. "But I've got over that. I tell you frankly, sir, that whether you give me the money or not, I shall still be grateful to you for your past liberality to me, and that I shall regret venturing to pay you a visit. And that reminds me, I'd better see about going."

The old man rose and stood before the fire, his pipe in his mouth, his head sunk on his breast, his eyes fixed on the floor.

"No," he said at last. "I wish you to stay. I will tell you when to go."

I wish to show you the estate—Stop!" he broke off, though Vane had made no attempt to speak. "If you think I've a notion of leaving I to you—of making you master of Vale Hall—better get rid of it as soon as possible. You will never inherit a rod of my land or a penny of my money, Vane Tempest."

If he had expected Vane to look disappointed or chagrined, he himself was disappointed.

"All right, sir," said Vane, cheerfully.

"You wonder why?" said the old man, frowning at him.

"No," began Vane; but the grim, stern voice cut him short.

"Perhaps I'll tell you before you go—perhaps not. Now I'm going out—going round the sheep-fence. You can go with me, or stay at home, just as you please. This is Liberty Hall—to you."

"I'll go with you, of course," said Vane, springing to his feet.

He let his hand fall upon the old man's shoulder, not presumptuously but with that peculiar, half-tender frankness which made the young man so universally irresistible.

"Never mind the confounded mon-

ny, sir," he said. "Let's be good friends and enjoy ourselves while 'm here."

CHAPTER XI.

The squire disappeared somewhere for the rest of the day, and Vane was left to himself. He sauntered about the place, and into the stables for one thing. He found several horses, all in good fettle, and evidently well cared for.

The gardens were extensive and admirably kept up, and the home, arm, he learned, was actually the arm on which the squire had worked in his boyhood and early manhood.

He was informed by James, the footman, who seemed to have been specially told off to wait upon him that the dinner hour was half past seven; and he went up to his room at seven, debating within himself whether he should dress or not.

He had brought an evening suit with him, and after a little hesitation, he decided to put it on; at any rate, he would be on the safe side.

When the great bell clanged out for dinner, he went down and found the squire.

The corduroy had disappeared, and in its place the old man wore an evening suit of dark blue, with lace ruffles to his shirt and brass buttons to his coat.

Vane had never, excepting in old prints, seen such a get-up. Probably the squire had never seen modern evening dress, for he looked Vane up and down and grunted; but whether with approval or condemnation it would be difficult to say. At any rate, he must have found it impossible to refrain from admiring the stalwart form and the distinguished air which belonged to his nephew.

The dinner was an extremely good one; but the squire confined himself to a chop and his silver flagon of ale, and left the many and well-cooked courses to Vane, who did full justice to them.

The meal was eaten, like the lunch, almost in silence, and when it was

finished the squire drew his chair to the fire and motioned Vane to do the same; but even then he did not seem inclined to talk, and smoked steadily, as if in profound thought. At last he said:

"If you care to stay here, Vane Tempest, you are welcome. There are horses, if you want them; choose one for your use. There is plenty of game, and you will find guns in the gun-room. As for society, you will have to put up with mine. I have no friends; no one comes to the Hall, and I never go beyond the bounds of the estate. Why should I?"

"Why, indeed, if it's large enough?" said Vane.

The old man smiled grimly.

"If you ride round it you will need a good horse, and the exercise will give you an appetite, nephew," he rejoined. "There is only one thing I want you to understand, and that is that I don't like questions."

"Questions?" said Vane.

"Yes," he said, with a frown. "If you happen to come upon anything that surprises you, keep your curiosity to yourself."

"All right, sir," said Vane, in his

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This letter tells of relief from the suffering of varicose veins by the use of Dr. Chase's Ointment. Many suffer from this trouble, not knowing the comfort to be obtained by the use of this great soothing ointment.

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prompt, frank way.

Soon afterward the old man got up. "I am an early riser, and I go to bed early," he said, "but you can sit up as long as you like. There's claret, and there is whiskey and brandy. You can ring for anything else you want. Good-night;" and with a nod he walked out.

Vane sat over the fire and smoked his pipe. Should he accept his uncle's invitation and remain for a time at Vale, or should he get an answer from him respecting the two thousand pounds, and return at once to town, and prepare for the new life he had mapped out for himself?

He decided to stay at least for a few days. The place interested him; and, if the truth must be told, the owner interested him far more than did the place. Blood is thicker than water, and Vane had already conceived a liking for this grim old relative, who lived alone, and clad by day in a laborer's suit, in Vale Hall.

The events of the day had for a time driven from his mind the incidents of the Witches' Caldron and little Nora; but as he was undressing he came upon the shilling threaded on the ribbon taken from her hair, and she seemed to rise before him.

He looked from the window in the direction of the Caldron, and his last thoughts as he fell to sleep were of the singular girl who had tried to kill him.

The next day he chose a horse—the squire had evidently given instructions that his nephew's wishes were to be consulted, and his orders obeyed—and went for a ride round some portion of the estate. The squire had not exaggerated. It was vast. There were snug farms standing in wide fields and meadows, large stretches of well-timbered woods, and lastly, the mines.

Vane gazed down the shafts of these sources of his uncle's wealth with curiosity and interest, and he began to understand, as he saw the big piles of ore, the carefully constructed railways, the gangs of swarthy men and scores of horses, that the squire of Vale was indeed a millionaire.

The men—farmers and miners—received him at first with the reserve which characterizes the people

of the western coast, but they soon

thawed beneath the genial sun of Vane's manner. There was a frank light-heartedness about him which melted the most reserved and standoffish; and after a day or two he got into the habit of taking his lunch with him in a sandwich box, and a flask, and eating it and smoking a pipe afterward, among the men. He liked to hear them talk in their quaint, rude dialect, and he asked enough questions about themselves, their families, and their work to fill a book.

(To be Continued.)

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