

A Millionaire's; — or — Countess Westerleigh.

"Oh! he didn't want me. He could not have taken me where he was going. I am rather surprised that I have not heard from him before this. I don't suppose there was any danger."

She raised herself, and the fan dropped from her hand. "Danger? What do you mean?" she said; and the anxiety pierced through the disguise of her cold voice.

Senley Tyers crossed the room and picked up the fan, and was about to offer it to her; then he remembered her refusal to take the handkerchief from him, and with a sudden flush laid the fan on the table.

She stretched out her hand and took it, her eyes meeting his in haughty questioning.

"What do you mean by danger?" she asked.

He raised his brows. "I scarcely know. He had to ride along the coast some distance, and the people who lent him the horse were full of warnings and forebodings."

She seemed actually about to rise; then sunk back and smiled.

"I think Mr. Tempest quite capable of taking care of himself," she said.

"Oh, yes!"—he laughed softly—"quite capable and strong enough. Still, I am rather surprised he has not written a line. When he comes back, I will do another sketch of him. This, as you say, is really bad."

He took it up and raised his palette-knife to dash it across the face of his eyes watching her sideways.

She sprang from the couch and caught his arm ere the knife could fall.

Her face was pale, her eyes flashing, her breath coming fast.

The two looked into each other's eyes in silence for an instant; then she said, with a catch in her voice proudly, haughtily:

"Do not destroy it, please. I—I will buy it!"

His face was as pale as hers, but sallow, and a sinister smile played over it as he flung the knife on the small table beside the easel.

"I will make you a present of it, if you will accept it, Lady Florence."

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He said, "Stay," as she inclined her head and was about to sweep back to the couch. "Do not move!" He turned quickly, and caught up his brush and palette. She watched him as he worked with haughty displeasure and impatience, then a look of wonder and interest began to dawn in her eyes.

He was transforming the face on the canvas; it had been a dead, soulless mask. It was now becoming, under his rapid and skillful hand, the face of a woman, alive and breathing.

He turned to her with a smile of triumph that still had something sinister in it.

"You see," he said, "there is life and soul there now! You have given me what I wanted! And"—he paused and fixed his eyes, glittering now with the jealousy, the rage that was burning within him—"and you have given me your secret!"

She recoiled instinctively, as one recoils from the uplifted head, the forked tongue of a snake.

"My secret?" she panted, haughtily, yet with an undertone of vague dread.

"Yes," he said. He pointed to the sketch which she still held, white unconsciously she pressed to her heart. "Yes, I give you that portrait, Lady Florence; what will you say if I give you the original—the man himself?"

The scarlet rushed to her face, her eyes blazed; then they fell beneath his half-mocking, half-imperious gaze.

"I do not understand you," she faltered, almost inaudibly.

"I think you do," he said, slowly. "Hush! your maid is listening. Come to me for a sitting to-morrow, and I will show you that I make no idle boast when I say that I can gratify the one, the dearest wish of you."

She tried to laugh, to beat him down—this low-born, presumption-adventurer—with the scorn which flowed so readily from her eyes, her lips; but she could not. His eyes his dark, sallow face, seemed to blot her in thrall.

For the first time since their acquaintance, they had changed places. It was she who, metaphorically, was at his feet, instead of he at hers.

She drew a long breath, opened her lips, as if about to declare that she would not come again; then she turned away in silence.

A smile of triumph curled Senley Tyers' thin lips. He took up her cloak and her fan, and approached her.

"Permit me," he said.

Yesterday, an hour ago, she would have drawn back with a surprised stare at his venturing to touch her garments, excepting to arrange them for her pose. Even now she shrunk a little and lifted her superb eyes;

but eventually she submitted—she who a week ago had refused to take a handkerchief from his hand.

CHAPTER IX.

Vane rode on in a state of mind difficult to describe. It was so hard to believe that all that had happened during the last few days had really happened and had not been dreamed.

One thing, however, impressed the reality of the incidents upon him, and that was the remembrance of Nora's kiss. The touch of the soft, warm lips clung to his as he rode along, and aroused a feeling within him which haunted him mile by mile.

He could not get her out of his

head—the pure, oval face, the dark-gray eyes, the thick tresses of soft, silky black; the very tones of her voice rang in his ears.

The strangeness of the elder woman, the discovery that they were smugglers, the attack of the revenue men, all faded to insignificance in his mind beside the remembrance of that girlish face as it had been held up to his with glowing eyes and quivering lips.

"Poor little Nora," he muttered.

"What an existence, what a fate! Can't read or write, and shut up with a smuggling aunt. She's worthy of a better life than that. And she tried to break my neck. But she made up for it afterward. If I had been killed outright, I should have had to forgive her."

He put his hand under his waistcoat and smiled—a half-tender, half-pitying smile—to feel if the shilling was still there. It was there all right, and, somehow, the feel of the coin was pleasant to him.

"I wonder if something couldn't be done for her?" he asked himself, wistfully. "She'll fall off those con-founded cliffs, or come to grief with that smuggling business, as sure as fate. I wish I could do something—get her away, into a kind of Home or some kind."

But even as he formulated the wish in his mind, he felt how hopeless and futile it was. He had promised to say nothing of the existence of the two women; and even if he had not given such a promise, he felt that Nora was the sort of girl who would go mad or die if she were shut up in a Home of any sort.

But for miles he thought of her, recalled her, dwelt upon her, as surely he had never yet dwelt upon the remembrance of any other woman. But then he did not regard Nora Trevanion as a "woman"; she was just a half-wild child-girl to him, no more.

He rode fast and had no difficulty following the road, and presently saw a gate before him opening into a magnificent avenue of oaks.

As he opened the gate and rode up the avenue he was somewhat surprised to see that the drive was well kept, that the shrubs lining it were choice ones, and, like the trees, evidently well cared for; but his surprise was intensified as, at a sudden bend of the road, he came in sight of what without exaggeration may be called a stately mansion.

It had a long facade pierced by arched windows opening on the ground floor on to a stone terrace with wide steps leading to velvet lawns studded here and there with glowing autumn flowers.

It was so stately, so grand a place that Vane pulled up hesitatingly. He had expected to see—well, a fair, old building of the farm-house type with a garden roughly kept and in harmony with the wild scenery and the inhabitants of the district.

This long, stretching pile, glowing white in the sunlight, "gave him pause," as Hamlet said.

"I suppose I've lost my way again," he said to himself; and he looked round for some one of whom he could make inquiries.

He saw no one for a minute or two, but presently a small, but old man dressed in fustian, and carrying a running hook in one hand, and a bunch of twigs in the other, came from among the trees and set to work on the hedge.

Vane rode up to him, and called him in his usual free-and-easy style.

"An Operation For Appendicitis Was Ordered by His Doctor, But Complete Cure Was Effected by Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills."

Almost anyone who has suffered from appendicitis will assure you that this trouble developed only after months or years of derangements of the liver and bowels.

Appendicitis can almost invariably be prevented, and very frequently cured, by the use of Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills.

In the case described in this letter the doctor had ordered an operation, but a thorough cure was brought about by this great medicine.

Mrs. J. A. Ballantyne, Surgeon, Falls, Ont., writes: "My husband was treated for appendicitis, and the doctors ordered an operation. But he would not consent to an operation and began the use of Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills. Since going so he has had no need of an operation, or even of a doctor, as the trouble has completely left him. I cannot find words to speak our gratitude for his cure."

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The old man turned his head without straightening his back, and looked up at him with a pair of keen, piercing eyes, which had in them, notwithstanding their keenness, that peculiar expression that grows into and sets hard in the eyes of the man who lives far from the madding crowd. Every laborer one meets on a country road has it.

The old man looked at the stalwart figure and handsome face half vacantly for a moment, as if he doubted the evidence of his eyes; then he said, quietly:

"What?"

Vane repeated the question.

"Yes; this is Vale Hall," said the old man; and swung his hook again, as if the question and questioner were done with, and had quite ceased to interest him.

"Thanks," said Vane. "Can you tell me if Mr. Vale is at home?"

The old fellow stopped his work and eyed him again.

"The squire's at home," he said, succinctly.

Vane laughed his light-hearted laugh.

"I beg pardon, I ought to have said 'the squire,'" he said. "Whereabouts are the stables, my man?"

"Back of the house," was the reply; and the hook went to work vigorously again.

"Look here," said Vane; "perhaps you'll come and show me the way and take my horse, will you?" and he rode up closer and held out half a crown.

The old man took it.

"Thank you; I'll show ye," he said; and he walked beside the horse with his hook crossed in true labor fashion over his arm.

"After all," said Vane, "I don't know why I should trouble you. I expect I should find a groom there."

"Ay, like enough," said the man; "but you've paid me, and I'll come."

"Right," said Vane, cheerily; "I'm glad the squire is at home, for I've come all the way from London to see him. And nearly broken my neck on the journey," he had almost added.

The old man nodded, but did not appear to feel any particular interest in the statement.

"What a beautiful place you have here!" Vane went on. "I suppose you have lived here a long time?"

"Ay," was the reply; "a good many years, young sir."

"Come," thought Vane, "this uncle of mine keeps his servants a long time; he can't be altogether a bad fellow."

The old man led him past the front of the house, Vane checking the horse to look and admire.

"Splendid!" he said, as he reached the stables.

A groom came forward, but the old man led the horse into a stall and halted it, as if desirous of earning the half crown; and Vane, wiping his forehead and flicking the dust from his clothes with his whip, said:

(To be Continued.)

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