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**The Countess of London.**

CHAPTER XXII.  
To Madge she appeared like a vision, ethereal. Her feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground; her loveliness was so spiritual that, in her state of confusion and bewilderment, Madge would not have been surprised if she had seen the slim, graceful figure float ceilingward.

Irene gazed at Royce and Seymour with a murmured "Royce," and made straight for Madge.

Madge rose as if compelled, and her handsome face flushed. She expected Irene to say, coldly: "How do you do? Have you had a pleasant journey?" But Irene took her hand, and bending forward, kissed her—not on the brow, but on the red, pure lips. Not a cold kiss which means "I hate you," but a warm, girlish, tender kiss that went straight to poor Madge's heart and brought the tears to her eyes.

"Oh, I am so sorry I am late," said Irene, seating herself beside her and still holding her hand; "but I had a bad headache and went to lie down, and I fell asleep and did not hear the bell. I am so sorry, for I meant to go down to the lodge and meet you. Will you forgive me, dear Madge?"

Madge was speechless for a moment. The sweet voice rang in her ears, echoed in her heart, filling her with gratitude and love.

"I am sorry your head ached," she said in a low voice tremulous with the feeling Irene's tenderness had called up. "Are you better now?"

"Quite," said Irene, with a smile; but even as she answered, Madge noticed that the lovely face was pale and looked wan, and that there were dark shadows under the eyes, that the smile was sad as well as tender. "Quite, I am used to headaches"—"Iately," she was going to add, but checked herself.

"And have you had a good time? You must tell me all about it when we are alone. How well Royce looks!" She glanced at him, only just glanced. "I have so much to say to you—to show you—"

The butler appeared.

"Dinner is served, my lady," he said in solemn tones.

Seymour came across the room to the two girls, and offered his arm to Madge.

She did not know what he meant for a moment, then she rose and put her hand in his arm. He smiled covertly at her hesitation, but said, courteously enough:

"I hope you have a good appetite, Madge. You should have, after your long journey."

He led her into the dining-room and put her in her seat, and the sense of embarrassment came rushing back upon her.

The room, with its oak paneling and pictures, its old tapestry hangings, looked richly in the subdued light. The table glittered with cut-glass and silver-plate; in the center, and in shining plateaus, were choice flowers, which shone like colored gems against the white cloth, and filled the air with fragrance.

There were three footmen in rich livery, as well as the butler, and to Madge they all seemed to be looking at her—watching for some mistake, some blunder on her part.

She looked down at her plate, noticed that there were two knives and forks and three wine-glasses at the side, and her heart sunk. She knew that she must blunder, must do something wrong.

Seymour went to the bottom of the table; Royce sat opposite her, and Irene by her side. Seymour pronounced a long grace, with a sanctified expression on his face, and in a kind of chant, and dinner commenced.

Madge watched Irene before she ventured to take up her spoon for the soup, and when the footman brought round the hock, said: "No, thank you," as Irene did. The things they brought her seemed endless, and she refused them, one after the other, until Irene, who looked to her continually, said: "But you are eating nothing, Madge, dear; you must take some of those cutlets."

Madge might have responded, "You yourself eat very little," for Irene seemed to have as little appetite as Madge; but she took the cutlet without a word.

She noticed that some of the things were eaten with a fork only, for no apparent reason, and that when she put her fork and knife down on her plate the footman instantly removed it. He seemed to her to be watching her every instant—as indeed he was—and she wondered how the rest could go on eating and talking as unconsciously as if these men-servants were not present.

As she looked across at Royce her mind wandered back—it had not very far to wander; only a few days—to the meals she and he had eaten round the camp-fire, and it seemed to her marvelous that he could ever have endured the roughness and wildness of his surroundings; and as she listened to his deep, musical voice, as he talked to the countess, she asked herself if it could be possible that the aristocratic gentleman in evening-dress, with the footman behind his chair, could really be Jack, the horse-dealer of the gypsies, and whether she could be Madge Lee, who a week ago lived in a caravan, and wore a red shawl, with Mother Kate and Lottie and Tony for companions.

And even in that moment the past rose before her, and her heart ached with a wistful tenderness for them all. Did they miss her? Had Tony cried much? Had he forgotten her?

Meanwhile, she listened to the talk going on around her. It was as strange to her as the great house, the magnificent rooms, the cut-glass, the plate, the silent, noiseless servants.

She heard Jack—no, Royce—asking his mother about Lord and Lady Balfarraz, and Sir William and the Duchess of Kingford, and she realized how widely she was separated from all these people.

The dinner proceeded, and, marvelous to relate, she had made no great blunder as yet; but presently the footman put on the dessert service. The plates were of rare Sevres. To each person was placed a finger-bowl of old English cut-glass, as rare and almost as precious as the Sevres.

Now Madge had declined all the wines excepting a glass of claret, and thinking that the water in the finger-bowls was for drinking, was about to take it in her hand, when Irene quickly, yet so softly, said:

"You are admiring this old glass, dear? They are very, very old. I think they came from Holywood Palace, and it is just possible that Mary Queen of Scots dipped her fingers in them as we do now;" and she dipped her fingers in the scented water and wiped them on her napkin.

Madge looked at her, her eyes eloquent with gratitude.

"I did not know," she said in a low voice.

Irene drew the dish of grapes toward her, and cut off a branch from the bunch with the silver-gilt scissors. "Are they not beautiful with the



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**Blue-jay**

bloom on them?" she said. "I want to show you the hot-houses and the conservatories. Are you fond of flowers, Madge? But what a silly question! All women love flowers. I cut nearly all these myself. Mr. Thomas, that's the head gardener, was in a good humor this morning. Sometimes he is not, and then—" she laughed.

She talked on the kind of talk which does not require anything more than a monosyllable in response, and so, as it were, covered and protected Madge in her shyness and ignorance.

Royce leaned forward every now and then and said a word or two, and smiled encouragingly and lovingly; but the countess sat with averted eyes, and Seymour watched his new sister-in-law with a smile which barely concealed a sneer, waiting for an opportunity to embarrass and discredit her.

He waited until there was a pause in the conversation, and, amid a profound silence, said, bending forward with a suave smile:

"Do you take any interest in missionary work—or—Madge?"

Madge looked up with a start, glanced at Royce almost appealingly, and then looked at Seymour timidly, the color coming and going on her beautiful face.

"Missionary work?" she repeated, vaguely.

Royce bit his lip and came to her rescue. He saw that Seymour's intention was to humiliate Madge and mortify him.

"No. Why should she?" he said, grimly, almost fiercely.

Seymour smiled blandly.

"Oh, why should she not?" he hissed, meekly. "You do her an injustice. I am sure, my dear Royce. I was going to tell her about the mission to Timbuctoo. Perhaps you have heard of it—or—Madge?"

Irene could feel against her dress Madge's hand trembling. There was an intense silence, Royce's face growing dark and angry as he saw Madge's distress.

For a moment she was speechless, then she lifted her glorious eyes and poured their light upon her tormentor.

"Timbuctoo?" she said in the low voice which had thrilled Irene when first she heard it, "Timbuctoo is a town in the south-west of Africa, on the banks of Lake Masina and the river Niger."

She had learned it from one of the books she had treasured up in her caravan, and with that wonderful memory which accompanies perfect health, repeated the paragraph word by word.

Seymour's face was a study. It went red, and his mouth opened and shut. He did not know what to say, for Timbuctoo was often on his lips, he had not the least idea as to where it stood in Africa. And this "common gypsy girl" had turned his weapon of sarcasm upon him and beaten him.

Royce stared from one to the other, then he leaned back and laughed—the laugh which had in the old time been so keen a delight to the countess and Irene.

**Destined Ways**

We boast of roads that we shape and tread.  
But, whether we like it or no,  
We take the roads that were made for us  
Long ages and ages ago.

We are no more than the silver hordes  
That, led by the tide, move forth  
From sheltered waters and follow the coast

The winds may howl and the seas may rage  
And fishermen take their toll,  
Yet ever and ever by reef and dune,  
Shall follow the track of shoal.

No hand may stay them but that  
strange hand  
That marked their path through the sea  
Ere man knew wisdom and laughed  
to scorn  
The puzzle of Destiny.

The strong man's will is a mighty power  
That battles to good through ill;  
When age creeps on and the flesh  
grows weak.

Where then is the strong man's will?  
We are no more than the wild black swans  
That fly when the world's at rest—  
A trailing flock north a crescent moon—  
West ever and ever west.

No hand may stay them but that  
strange hand  
That marked their course in the air,  
Ere man, at the birth of time, was  
born  
To sorrow and toil and care.

We boast of roads that our own selves  
build;  
But whether we like it or no,  
We take the roads that were built for us  
Long ages and ages ago.

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**Will Maeterlinck Fight Fistic Duel?**

Challenged by Sicilian Lawyer—  
Latter May Be April 1 Victim.

Milan, Italy, April 5.—(Associated Press).—Following a challenge sent by Sebastian Bondi, a Sicilian lawyer in this city, to Maurice Maeterlinck, the famous Belgian poet and playwright, for an alleged defamatory article recently published concerning the poet's Sicilian trip, lively speculation has been aroused in sporting circles here as to whether the affair will be settled by ten rounds with the gloves, or a duel with the sword or pistol. Maeterlinck's prowess with the gloves is well known. In his challenge to the poet, Signor Bondi is quoted as saying:

"I read with indignation and disgust your infamous article on your recent trip to Sicily, published in a Belgian review and then reproduced in the Secolo in Milan on April 11. "As a citizen of glorious Palermo, famed for its courtesy, I hotly you herewith that I consider your ears boxed. I hold myself at your disposal."

Friends of Bondi warned him to beware of April 1 publications.

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april 17, 18

**To My Little Son**

By JULIA JOHNSON DAVIS.  
In your face I sometimes see  
Shadows of the man to be,  
And eager, dream of what my son  
Will be in twenty years and one.

But when you are to manhood grown,  
And all your manhood ways are  
known,  
Then shall I, wistful, try to trace  
The child you once were in your face?

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- BOYS' BLACK CALF BLUCHER BOOTS—With pegged soles. Sizes 9 to 13, 2.75; sizes 1 to 5, 3.30.

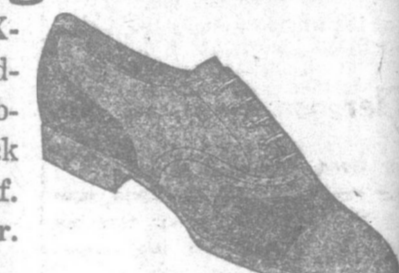


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Special. Heavy perforations, bevel sole and heel. A regular 9.00 Brogue. Sizes 6 to 9. For . . . . . 6.75  
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GREY SUEDE—1 strap, low rubber heel . . . . . 4.50

ALL PATENT—1 strap, low rubber heel . . . . . 3.25

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