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THE HEIR OF LANCEWOOD

CHAPTER XII.

"I am going to devote the morning to sentiment," she replied. "This desk contains momentos of my youth, souvenirs of all kinds. I am going to look through it, and devote myself to the task of recalling all about them."

With a pretty parade of importance she opened the desk. It did not seem to contain anything more than a few faded flowers, old letters, and dried leaves. Occasionally mildew would turn to Sir Arthur with a smile, and, showing him a withered spray, tell some laughable anecdote concerning it; and Vivien noticed that these stories were all of people in high life, whose names she mentioned quite familiarly.

A mishap occurred—the desk was upset, and its contents rolled on to the floor. They were soon replaced; and, when her ladyship had finished her sentimental little scene she went away, taking the desk with her. When Vivien rose to quit the room, something lay glittering under the hem of her dress. She took it in her hand—it was a small common locket, clumsily made, and certainly not of pure gold. On it she saw the initials "V. P."

A few minutes afterward Lady Nestle returned. "I have lost a little

locket," she said—"one that I value very much. It was one given to me when I was a little child. It has my initials on it."

"It is here," answered Vivien. "The initials are 'V.P.'—how could they be yours? I thought your name was 'D'Este!'"

"Did I say 'my initials' I meant those of the person who gave it to me."

"You are very clever," thought Vivien, "but the day will come when I shall know who you are, and how you contrived to dupe my father."

When Lady Nestle had gone away with the locket, Mr. Dorman looked at Vivien. It was not often that he made any remark, no matter what passed.

"That seems strange, Miss Nestle," he said. "Lady Nestle is quick in resource."

"Yes," replied Vivien, "she makes fatal admissions, and then very skillfully negatives them."

The young secretary had drawn nearer to her, and stood looking at her with passionately loving, wistful eyes.

"I wish that I might dare to ask you one question, Miss Nestle," he said.

"You may ask me what you will," she replied, kindly.

"Have you ever entertained any doubts as to Lady Nestle—doubts of her being what she represented herself to be?"

"I must decline to answer," she replied. "If ever the time comes when an answer to your question may be useful, I will remember it—until

then, let it rest."

He longed to say that, if it pleased her, he would devote his life to finding out the antecedents of Sir Arthur's wife; but her dignified calmness forbade him.

CHAPTER XIII.

More than two years had passed since Sir Arthur brought his fair girlish bride home. She had been a first intoxicated with her power, unwilling to part with the least iota of it. She had been pitiless to Vivien. She had never spared her a mortification or a humiliation. She had never shown her the least consideration. Lady Nestle's only endeavor had been to prove always that she was mistress—sole and perfect mistress—and her triumph had been complete.

The first check to her authority was the refusal of Sir Arthur to agree to one of her whims. She wanted a new drive through the park—why, no one could understand, but she chose to say that she would like it made; and in order to make it, some of the finest old trees would have to be cut down. Sir Arthur laughed when his young wife talked about her whim.

"It must be a beautiful drive," she said; "and I should like it to be called after myself—Lady Valerie's Drive. Then all the future Nestles would have something to make them think of me."

"My dear Valerie," returned Sir Arthur, "you have asked me almost the only favor I cannot grant you."

"Why can you not grant it?" she asked.

"Because, although I am lord of Lancewood, I have no power to cut down those trees. The timber in the park belongs to my heir just as the house does. I could not pull that down—at least without the consent of my heir and successor."

"What is the use of being master if you cannot do as you like?" she said, impatiently.

"That is not the question," he replied. "I am compelled to leave to my successor the estates, the house, the timber, intact as I receive them. I should have to ask Vivien's permission to cut down those trees; and, as it would deteriorate Vivien's inheritance, I should not like to propose such a scheme to her."

"But she would say 'Yes' if you asked her, Arthur, I am sure."

"So am I," he replied. "That is the very reason I could not ask her; it would seem as though I took advantage of her sex. I am well aware that if I asked such a thing from a

son instead of a daughter, he would scarcely hesitate to say 'No.'"

He did not see the expression of chalice that came over her face.

"I did not know that you considered Vivien so entirely mistress?"

"My dear Valerie, she is not so at present; but in time she will be so—that is, unless it should be the will of Heaven to send me a son."

"Would you not like a son to succeed you better than a daughter?" she asked.

"I might have done so once upon a time," he replied; "but now I am not quite so sure of it."

"Not so sure, Arthur. Why?"

"Because Vivien has been, as it were, trained to the management of the estate. She really understands it as well as any steward or agent. She knows who have leases, and for how long they are granted—in fact, she understands all the details. Then she has studied the subject; she knows the best position for church-building, the best situation for the new schools we have planned."

"To be built after your death?" interrupted Valerie. "How can you talk of such things?"

"No, to be built during my lifetime, if I choose. You would laugh if I told you all the abstruse works that I have studied—works on social science, social reform, sanitary reform. I have been quite amused—amused," he continued, "yet touched, you know. Valerie, my conscience reproaches me at times. I have never wronged any one, yet I have been by no means a model landed proprietor; my indolence and love of ease have stood in my way. I have been quite conscious of my defects, and I repeat that it has touched me to see my daughter in the early spring-tide of her life work hard to remedy my defects. She will make a noble ruler over a noble domain."

Lady Nestle looked very discontented.

"Then you would not care very much for a son, Arthur?"

"I have never given the subject any consideration, Valerie," he replied. "I do not know if I should care very much now for the blessing I once passionately craved. It would be hard, too, on Vivien; she has been brought up as my mistress."

Lady Nestle laid her arm carelessly on her husband's shoulder.

"I do believe," she said, "that you love Vivien better than you love me."

Sir Arthur laughed, but made no reply.

"Do you—tell me—do you love her best?"

"The two loves are so different, Valerie, there can be no degree of comparison between them. She is my dearly-loved daughter; you are my dearly-loved wife."

But Lady Nestle was not content. She could not endure that her husband should speak so lovingly of the girl whom she detested, nor could she endure the knowledge that in the time to come all authority would leave her and pass to her rival.

"Then I must give up my pretty plan," she said, "and be content with the old drive. There will be no Lady Valerie's Drive after all."

"Yes, it must be abandoned. If you wish your very pretty name to be commemorated, we will plant some part of the grounds, and call it 'Lady Valerie's Pleasance.' Would that do as well?"

"It must do. I see no alternative," she replied.

"I take great pride in one thing, Valerie," said Sir Arthur—"it is the first wish of yours that has been ungratified. You have been very much spoiled, my darling."

And Lady Nestle was forced to be content, although the refusal served only to increase her dislike to her rival.

This little incident brought home to her more forcibly than ever the fact that, after all, her sovereignty would not be of long duration—that although she seemed to conquer, in reality her authority would end so soon that it was not worth having at all.

Another little occurrence took place which increased her annoyance. She was in the library one morning with Sir Arthur and Mr. Dorman, when the family solicitor, Mr. Greston, was announced. He had come from London on business connected with the estate. Lady Nestle received him very graciously. It was part of her policy to be civil to every one. She never felt sure what might happen, what friends she might need, and she therefore deemed it best to conciliate all. She paid little attention to what was passing until she heard Mr. Greston say—

"You cannot do that, Sir Arthur, without Miss Nestle's consent."

"My daughter will consent," said Sir Arthur. "We have talked the matter over. She gives her consent on certain conditions."

"We shall require Miss Nestle's signature, then," observed Mr. Greston. "As heiress of Lancewood, she must sign these papers."

(To be Continued.)

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LATEST

From the Front

Messages Received Previous to 9 a.m.

OFFICIAL.

LONDON, July 26.

The Governor, Newfoundland: General French reports the successful repulse of German bomb attacks.

General Hamilton reports Turkish attack on the northern trenches, pushed, the enemy leaving about dead.

In Aden Hinterland, Sheikh Othman has been re-occupied, and the Turkish pursued for five miles.

The French Government reports success in Vosges at Dan do St. where a powerful defensive organization was carried. Over 800 prisoners were captured.

The Russian Government reports desperate fighting at various points on the Narew front. In the sector Kosehan-Pultusk, part of the enemy forces succeeded in crossing the bank. Between the Vistula and Bug on the Lublin Cholm front, enemy's offensive has ceased, except in Grubieszow district.

The Italian Government reports enemy attacks in Montenegro repulsed with great losses. Action on the Carso Plateau is developing favorably.

BONAR LAZELL

ST. PIERRE BULLETIN.

PARIS, via St. Pierre, July 26.

On Sunday in Artois, between Oise and Aisne, the usual artillery duels took place. On the northern banks of the Aisne in Troyon district and in Champagne on the Perthes-Beauejour front, mining operations continued to our advantage and in southern Woivre, intensive cannonading. In the side two battalions consolidated, in spite of bombardment, the positions gained Jan de Sapt, Friday. The number of German prisoners taken was 110, 600 and 825 men, of which 700 are wounded. There were numerous corpses in the trenches. We had engaged on our side two battalions of an infantry regiment, machine guns have been found in the trenches taken.

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