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The Old Marquis;

The Girl of the Cloisters

CHAPTER VII.
A CHAINED HEART.

"You have nothing to say? I regret that you should have troubled me and yourself by insisting on an interview at which I look like a fool and you feel like one."

Lord Edgar flushes hotly, then remembers who it is that speaks, and what he is suffering.

"I have to go to town, sir, at once," he says.

"Then why not go?" retorts the icy voice, keen and biting. "What is it you want? Money? In the name of Heaven and earth get it out of the steward. I have nothing else you are likely to require. Go to the steward. Go to—wherever your destination may be, and leave me in peace. Good-day!" and striking the hand which he leans back and fixes his eyes on the opposite wall as if he had suddenly become deaf, and blind, and dumb.

Mr. Palmer opens the door, and with an "I-told-you-so" look, ushers Lord Edgar out.

And so fate, in the shape of the marquis' gout, rivets another chain in the destinies of Lela Temple.

CHAPTER IX.
FRIENDLY ENEMIES.

LELA flew to her own room. Her cheeks were flushed with the thrill of that kiss which she herself had given Lord Edgar. She was trembling with a sense of a new life; to use a metaphor much beloved of the old poets, Love's dart rankled sweetly in her heart, and she wanted to be alone, not only for a few minutes, to realize all the joy that had befallen her.

The room—a dainty little apartment—looked out on the nuns' garden. It was not elaborately furnished—Mr. Temple's salary was a very modest one—but it was as neat as a pin and eloquent of that grace which only a woman's presence can supply. With glowing eyes she—who who twenty-four years ago had never known an emotion to stir her heart—brow herself on her knees beside the bed and hid her face in her hands. But if her idea was to shut out all thought of Lord Edgar she did not succeed. The touch of his strong hand, the pressure of his strong arm seemed about her even now. His earnest "I love you! I love you!" rang in her ears, and made sweet music of the silence. His stalwart form and handsome face seemed to penetrate the space and stand before her.

she could not shut the vision out; her whole being was suffused with that joy which a maiden experiences once and once only in her life—the joy springing from the knowledge that she is beloved.

If the professor had been a woman instead of a book-worm he would have read her secret at a glance when, a little later, she stole down to tea, her face still flushed, her eyes hidden under the dark-fringed lids.

But he, buried in his books, had quite forgotten that she had been away all day, and had forgot the existence of Lord Edgar, until there came the sound of carriage wheels rolling down the gravel drive, then he looked up absently, and said:

"Hem! Lord Edgar's gone—thank the gods!"

Her work nearly fell from her hands, and her face blanched; then she smiled with the sweet consciousness of assurance, and said:

"Oh, no, grandpapa; he is not going to-night."

"If you do you—ah, I forgot. Did you enjoy your walk? You were both bored to death, I suppose, eh? I can't imagine what you found to talk about. He knows nothing about anything but dogs and horses, and you know nothing of anything except books, and very little of them," with gentle sarcasm.

Lela colored, and went to the window with a sense of guilt upon her. "We didn't bore each other, grandpapa," she said, meekly, feeling an utter hypocrite and deceiver.

"No! Then the pity I expended on you both was thrown away. But what makes you say that he has not gone?"

"Because he said he was not going," she answered, looking out at the sunset sky, and wondering how soon she should hear his step on the terrace.

"I'm sorry for that," remarked Mr. Temple, grimly. "Something will be sure to happen if he remains. We shall be burned in our beds, or the marquis and he will quarrel. Yes, he had far better go!"

Something had happened already, she thought, as she leaned her cheek against the window frame and watched and listened.

The minutes grew into hours; the sun fell, and the stars came out, a crescent moon grew into silver and shone down on her face, pale and wistful now as a thirsty flower, and still his step did not break the silence of the terrace. The professor, sitting over his books, was conscious at last of the night air, and looked up.

"Lela, you will catch cold; come in and close the window."

With a sinking of the heart she obeyed; a disappointment greater were almost than she could bear weighed upon her. Had he forgotten? No! that was impossible. What had happened? Where was he?

The door opened and a servant entered.

"Lord Edgar's compliments, miss, and here is the book," she said, putting down on the table a small packet.

Mr. Temple's ears pricked up at the word "book."

"What is it, Lela?" he said; "what book?"

With a flush of shame she took up the parcel gently, and carried it to a lamp at the other end of the room.

"I'll see, grandpapa," she said, tremblingly.

What did it mean? Breaking the thread with uncertain fingers she took out a small volume bound in morocco. As she turned it over wondering, she saw a paper stretching out from the leaves. With a thrill she seized

You need not shake the bottle

H.P. sauce

is the same all through—the last drop is as delicious as the first.

It. There was a line of writing on it, just one line:

"I am obliged to go to London at once. Good-night!"

That was all, but as if it had been the most precious piece of wisdom that had ever been penned, she hid it in her hand, and slipped it in the bosom of her dress.

Then, with a novel feeling of guilt and deceit upon her, she took the book and put it down before her grandfather.

"It is a volume of poems, grandpapa," she said, and glided out of the room that he might not see the tears that rushed to her eyes.

Gone! She should not see him, should not touch his hands before she slept! Oh, how long the night would be! How long!

Lord Edgar flung himself into a first-class carriage of the express in that frame of mind which schoolboys are wont to describe as "riled."

That he should be journeying to London, instead of jeering against the window with Lela's lovely face framed in it, was exasperating in the highest degree. He bought an evening paper, and flung it aside after a glance; a couple of cigars scarcely soothed him, and when, after what seemed to him an unreasonable time, the train reached Paddington, he flung himself into a hansom and scowled at the London streets, just cooling off, after a hot day, as if they were a city of desolation.

"Confound Flyaway, and Clifford, and the whole of the Jockey Club," he murmured. "I wonder what she is doing now? Is she waiting still? I'll be bound that idiot of a Palmer will forget the book. I wonder how early the trains start in the morning?"

In this restless and impatient mood he reached his chambers. They were in the Albany, one of the best sets; and, hot as London was, his valet had managed to keep the luxurious rooms cool and comfortable. The man was standing on the stairs as he entered the hall.

"Mr. Revel is here, my lord. He has had your telegram," he said, as he opened the door of the drawing-room.

As Edgar entered, the tall, thin figure of Clifford Revel arose from the depths of an easy-chair. He was in evening dress, an exquisite white orchid in his button-hole, his dark, handsome face set in its usual expression of calm, impassive acuteness. Something faintly like a sneer curved the clean-cut lips as he looked at the flushed countenance and kindled eyes of his cousin, and as he held out his hand, white and long, and beautifully shaped, he raised his dark eyebrows with a deprecatory smile.

"How do you do, Edgar?" he said.

"How do you do, Clifford? What on earth's the matter? Jove, how hot it is! Lela, open that window—do you mind, Clifford?"

"Not a bit! Is it so warm? You look hot."

"Look hot! I feel it!" retorted Lord Edgar, flinging his hat and dust coat to the valet, who took them, and noiselessly disappeared.

Clifford Revel pushed the chair on which he had been sitting to the window, and laying his white hands on Lord Edgar's broad shoulders, pushed him gently, but firmly into it.

"Sit down, my dear fellow," he said, in his slow, musical voice. "You are upsetting yourself, as usual, without, let me trust, due cause. The horse—"

Lord Edgar had forgotten all about Flyaway again, and stared. Then he remembered.

"Confound the horse!" he said.

"Quite so," retorted Clifford Revel, if anything spoken in so soft and serene a voice could be called a retort. "That is exactly what all the men who have been backing her will do, and they will confound you and me also."

"What's the matter with her?" demanded Lord Edgar. "The place is like an oven! What a man wants to live in such a dusthole as London in the summer for I can't conceive."

"Ha! Only on Sunday last you remarked, if my memory does not deceive me, that there was no place worth living in but London."

Lord Edgar colored.

Sunday last! Yes, but something had happened since then. He had not carried Lela across the stream then.

"Did I? I must have been a greater idiot than I thought myself. Have you had anything to drink? Lela," calling to the man, "bring some soda and brandy and the cigars. Well, go on."

But Clifford Revel glanced toward the man warningly, and remained silent until he had done his service and left the room.

"My dear Edgar, let me beg of you to exercise a little caution; one word of this business before our silent but intelligent Lela, and the news will be all over town."

"Well, he's gone now. Take a cigar. What is it?"

"No, thanks; I am going out."

Lord Edgar glanced at the scrupulously neat evening attire, and nodded.

"The horse, my dear Edgar, is dead lame." He said it in exactly the same tone as in which he had declined the cigar, and paused in the middle of the sentence to re-arrange the orchid, which had fallen a little askew.

Lord Edgar whistled.

"By Jove! How did it happen?"

"How do these things happen? No one knows—no one ever will know. The fact is, however, sufficient. We—you and I and all our friends—have backed the horse to win, and, if she runs, we shall lose. There is no time to be lost, you see. I was sorry to wire, but I dare say you were glad enough for an excuse to return; though, by the way, you don't seem so," and his keen, dark eyes scanned for a moment the frank, handsome face that certainly did not express much joy.

Lord Edgar colored and laughed, then frowned. The keen eyes watched him closely.

"I'll ask after the Abbey and my uncle directly," he said. "About this horse first. Of course, we must get out of the mess."

"Get out of it!" repeated Lord Edgar, looking puzzled.

Clifford Revel nodded, and took a cigarette.

"There will be just time, if we commence to-morrow morning."

"Commence what?" demanded Lord Edgar, with a frown.

"To lay against her," said Clifford Revel, coolly. "We must save our money—"

Lord Edgar sprang to his feet.

"Clifford, what are you talking about? Are you joking? Do you mean to say that, knowing the horse is lame and can't win, that we must bet against her, though up to now we have backed her right through?"

"Of course!" was the reply. "What else would you do?"

"Anything but that, at any rate!" returned Lord Edgar, staring at him.

"Why—why, Clifford, it would be dishonest! I wouldn't do it to save every penny I'm worth! Come, say that you are joking! Of course, the horse shan't run! I'll have it put in the papers that she's lame."

(To be Continued.)

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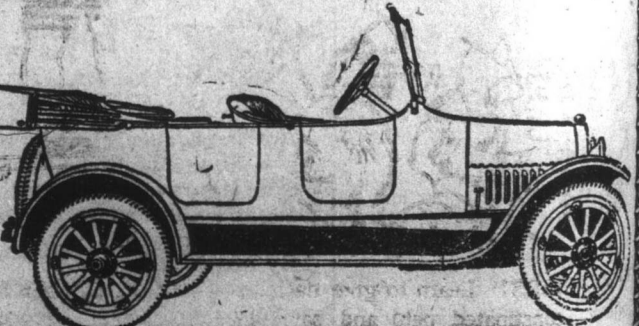
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