

Lord Lockington

(Continued from page 18.)

the shut-up room between Edna and the man in the cloak? And, even if she had known of it, and reported it to the Viscountess, how could such a meeting be called "making acquaintances in the neighbourhood?"

Edna was amazed, and did not attempt to answer. Lady Lockington went on quickly: "You don't deny you've made some acquaintances, I suppose?"

"I've been to luncheon at the vicarage. The only acquaintances I've made were there," said Edna.

"Lord Lockington has given you some nice presents, hasn't he?"

"Yes, two lovely presents. He sent me the beautiful piece of stuff which I am now wearing as a dress. It was very good of him, as I felt rather shabby in my own best frock in this magnificent house. And he gave me a most beautiful cameo ring."

"Is that all you've received?"

"All! Yes," said Edna, smiling. "I think I'm very fortunate in having had such nice things given me, which I certainly didn't expect."

"H'm!" said Lady Lockington drily.

Edna, quite aware that she was not believed, cast down her eyes, but attempted no protest. What was the use? It could not, she thought, be many hours now before the lady's dissatisfaction with her husband for having dared to engage a member of his household without her permission would find vent in a notice to the girl-musician—"the singing-girl," as she had called her—to leave her situation. In the meantime the best course was humility, meekness, and as much silence as was compatible with common courtesy.

When once she had found out as much about the gifts as Edna would or indeed could tell her, Lady Lockington grew taciturn on her side, and the desert was reached very quickly. Then Edna waited eagerly for permission to go away and be at peace. But Lady Lockington said:

"I must hear some of this playing and singing which is thought so wonderful. Will you come into the drawing-room and play something?"

"I'd much rather not, if you will excuse me, Lady Lockington," said Edna hastily.

"Why? You can play for Lord Lockington."

"That's not the same thing. He's fond of music."

"And how do you know that I'm not? As a matter of fact I'm very musical."

"Then I'm sure my playing wouldn't be brilliant enough to please you. I should be very grateful if you'd let me off."

"Impossible! Go to the drawing-room, and I will join you there. You won't have to waste your music on me: some girls don't care to play to please their own sex, I know. I'm going to write a note to Mr. Kage, one of our neighbours, and ask him to come round."

Edna was interested at the name. She was immensely anxious to see this wild and dashing neighbour of the Viscount's, whose exploits were the talk, if not the terror, of the country, and about whom such dreadful stories were told.

She took little notice, therefore, of the lady's sneer, did not even protest against the implication that she would not play except for the other sex, and went obediently into the White Saloon.

She thought, with dismay, as she entered it, how ungrateful she had been to find the evenings passed in that beautiful room lonely, and how much worse this particular evening was likely to be. Lady Lockington was quite the most unsympathetic person she ever remembered to have met, and Edna wondered at the ill-nature which appeared in her looks and tones whenever she addressed her hapless little fellow-diner.

In a few minutes Lady Lockington came into the drawing-room, exciting again Edna's involuntary admiration by the sparkle of her jewels and the easy way in which she managed the long train of her dress so that it fell into graceful folds whenever she moved.

Lady Lockington seemed restless and anxious, Edna thought, and she kept looking at the little French clock on the side-table, and at a watch she wore pinned on her own breast in the midst of clouds of filmy lace.

She appeared to have forgotten her



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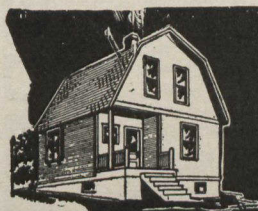
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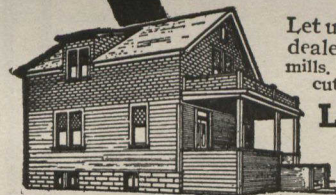
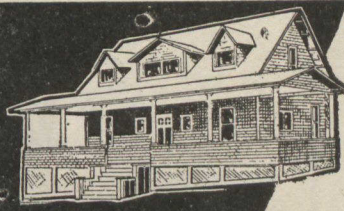
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