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HER HUMBLE LOVER

"Well, come now, dear, I am sure they are all at sixes and sevens."

"Come, then," he says; and with a last embrace he draws her arm within his, and crossing the hall, enters the ballroom.

As he does so, and as if in accordance with a preconcerted signal, the band breaks out into the opening waltz. Couples are immediately formed, and whispering, "Remember, darling, the first dance is mine," he leads her straight toward the velvet-covered seats upon which Lady Rookwell and some other dowagers, and the Duchess and Laura Derwent are seated, awaiting the starting of the ball.

"Yes, yes," says Signa, hurriedly. "But they are all waiting, Hector."

"Let them wait," he says again, with a smile; and then, as they come close to the raised seats, he says:

"How do you do, Miss Derwent?"

Laura Derwent starts—a hundred eyes are fixed on her—and rises with a broad stare in her eyes, speechless, bewildered—looking from Hector Warren to Signa upon his arm.

"How do you do, Miss Derwent?" he repeats.

Then at last, and to the relief and amazement of those near her, Laura Derwent exclaims:

"Lord Delamere!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Lord Delamere!" The title runs through the room like a signal. Those who have begun to dance, stop, as if by mutual consent, and stare in the direction of the group round the raised seats. There is a dead, an almost painful silence. The duchess, a pleasant but not too intellectual old lady, puts up her eye glasses and eyes Hector Warren—the Right Honorable Dereux Evelyn Hector Delamere Earl of Delamere and Marchant, Knight of the Garter and member of half a dozen other mighty orders—with eyes of amazement; Aunt Podswell clasps her hands and turns pale; the rector's face drops and his hands fall to his side like those of a mechanical figure. Mortification, chagrin, absolute fear are expressed in his countenance and attitude. Even Laura Derwent, quick witted as she is, is thoroughly overwhelmed and thrown off her mental balance. Lady Rookwell alone seems unmoved; with a sarcastic grin she looks from Lord Delemere to the others with the keenest enjoyment. And Signa? Half-dazed, half incredulous, she turns her violet eyes from one to the other, and with a pale face and slow, heavy breath, waits for the next development of the mystery.

Lord Delamere, quite motionless and silent, looks as if nothing had occurred, and waits for Laura Derwent's response to his greeting as if she had but paused to pick up her handkerchief. She is the first to recover from the stupor which seems to have fallen upon them all—all save Lady Rookwell.

With a laugh and a flush, the beauty holds out her hand.

"How do you do, Lord Delamere?" she says. "You have been good enough to come, then? And this little surprise we ought to be grateful for! It is just the finishing touch to a marvelous and extraordinary piece of business!"

He bows and goes up to the duchess.

"I fear you do not remember me, your grace," he says. "I was a little boy in a velvet tunic when I saw you last. Permit me to introduce Miss Grenville."

The duchess gives him her hand and her fingers to Signa, still standing.

"Yes—no—but—I don't understand," she gasps, open-eyed. "Of course, you are Lord Delamere——"

"Yes, alas!" he says, with a smile, and then he turns to Aunt Podswell, who rises hastily, and, with fearful meekness and awe, and trembling, stands before him.

"I shall have to ask your forgiveness at a more fitting opportunity for my little masquerade, Mrs Podswell," he says, in a kindly way.

"Yes—my—my lord," murmurs the unfortunate lady, utterly miserable as she thinks of the many times she has snubbed Hector Warren, little dreaming that the threadbare, poor and unknown stranger whom she had dubbed opera-singer and adventurer was the great earl—her husband's patron.

As for the rector, he cannot find words to express his dismay, and stands open-mouthed and crimson, and Delamere considerately leaves him to recover himself. But Lady Rookwell cannot be passed by.

"Well," he says, with a most pleasant light in his eyes, as he stands looking down at her, with Signa on his arm, "I suppose it is useless to expect your forgiveness, Lady Rookwell. I have one consolation, that my little disguise never deceived you for a moment," and he laughs.

"Yes, but it did—for a moment, but nor for long," she says, with a malicious chuckle. "I smelt a rat the first night I met you at the Rectory. You see, I remember my room, and when I got home that night, my lord, I studied it, and—he! he!—I detected the wolf in lamb's clothing. I hope you have enjoyed yourself; I hope you are deriving an immense amusement from the dismay and mystification of all these good people," and she waves her fan to the guests murmuring amongst themselves.

His face grows grave

"You misunderstand and wrong me," he says in a low voice; "I did not desire to mystify anyone. I had, at starting, no reason but to avoid fuss, but later—no matter, I will explain everything, even to your satisfaction."

"You will be cleverer than I think you if you can," she retorts, significantly; "but if you think this little dramatic surprise has lasted long enough, it would be better to set these two hundred people a-dancing, my lord," with a grin at the title.

He nods and smiles.

"You are quite right," he says. "Come, Signa."

She stands motionless for a moment, and then makes a faint movement to withdrew his arm, but he holds it too tightly, and putting his arm round her waist, he takes her hand and they begin to dance.

One-half the room is still in doubt as to what has actually happened. Some know that the gentleman whom they have not taken the slightest notice of, and have treated with the utmost neglect since he came here amongst them is the great Earl of Delamere, but the rest are simply curious as to the evident excitement his advent has created; and soon the inviting strains of one of the best London bands make them oblivious, at least for a few minutes to the momentary sensation When Lord Delamere and Signa move away, the tongues of the group he has left loosen themselves With a groan the rector wipes the perspiration from his face and creeps near to his wretched Amelia.

"Great heavens!" he whispers, huskily. "Who—who would have thought it possible! There is not any mistake, I suppose. No—no. It is evidently true. But to think of it—to think of—of—the way we treated him sometimes! My flesh creeps, Amelia! Of course, that living is gone! If I could but have guessed it! Oh, dear—oh, dear! It—it is really too bad! And Signa——"

"Knew it all the time, no doubt!" whispers Aunt Ameila, shakily. "Joseph, I—I always said there was—something — uncommon—and distinguished about him!"

"Did you? I don't remember it!" retorts the rector, his desperation giving him courage. "If I had followed your advice I should have treated him like a tramp! There! don't make an exhibition of yourself before all these people!" for Aunt Amelia begins to sniff and whimper hysterically..

"This is very remarkable!" says the duchess, still following with her eyeglass the tall figure, easily distinguished by its band of blue ribbon "This—really, I do nor like to suggest it—but this isn't a little piece of masquerading thrown in for our amusement, Miss Derwent?" and she smiles ponderously at that young lady.

"Would to heaven it were!" exclaims Laura Derwent, fanning herself furiously, and staring into vacancy. "No! It is Lord Delamere. I should know him from a thousand. I recognized him in a moment! And to think—to think—that I have been ordering him about all these weeks! That, not content with begging a man's house I have been treating him like a superior kind of clerk of the works or steward. Oh! if I could sink into the earth!"

"He, he!" grins Lady Rookwell, with intense enjoyment. "You met your match, my dear Laura, that day at Casa—Casalina!"

"Aunt, I'll never forgive you!" she exclaims with tears in her eyes. "It's too cruel. But it serves me right."

"That's the truest word you ever spoke, my dear; but, take your punishment like a man, as you ought to have been, and enjoy yourself. After all, you have succeeded; you have got your great fish here, and you will get yourself talked about! Society papers! Why, it will be in all the papers. My dear, you will make another sensation out of this little affair."

"It is too cruel of him," repeats poor Laura.

"I won't have that!" exclaims Lady Bumbleby. "I don't believe he meant it that way at all. I liked him from the first; I quite fell in love with him that evening at your place, my dear. He was so very amusing and pleasant. I never laughed so much in my life!"

"He is amusing enough now," retorts Lady Rookwell, sarcastically. "But you don't many of you laugh!"

"And that dear girl, Miss Grenville, I am delighted at her good fortune," adds Lady Bumbleby.

"Ah!" says Laura Derwent, with a start; "I was forgetting her! Yes, of course. Why, she will be the Countess of Delamere!"

"Of course," retorts Lady Rookwell, concisely. "He, he! What some of the mothers with marriageable daughters will say of her, when they quite realize the big fish has escaped them after—I beg your pardon, my dear," to the duchess, who has six daughters somewhere about the room.

"Oh, dont apologize to me; my girls are all engaged, or in the nursery," says her grace, graciously. "And that young lady, Miss—Miss Grenville, is engaged to Lord Delamere. Indeed! Yes, she is a fortunate girl!"

The "fortunate girl" meanwhile is still dancing with the greatest man in the county. The man who until a few moments ago she thought plain Hector Warren, and whom she cannot cannot yet realize as a mighty earl. Her brain seems whirling, her heart throbs and palpitates; the magnificent room spins round, but yet he holds her in a firmly-gentle grasp, knowing that all eyes are watching her, and determined that they shall not see the dismay and bewilderment that he knows are dominant in her mind.

But presently, as some couples drop out of the circle of the dance, he stops, and gently taking her arm, leads her into one of the ante-rooms, and closing the door, screened by a curtain, draws her to him, and looking down into her troubled eyes, murmurs:

"Speak to me, Signa. My darling, tell me you have forgiven me."

She tries to withdraw herself from him, but he holds her by main ,though gentle, tender force.

"Speak!" he whispers. "Tell me that you think me inconsiderate, unfair, anything—but speak. I cannot bear to see you look like that ,so full of doubt and— trouble. Will you not say that you forgive me, my darling?"

"Forgive!" she echoes, vagueiy, putting up her hand and pushing the hair from her brow with a gesture of bewilderment; then she lifted her eyes to him.

"Is it true?" she murmurs.

"What, dearest—that my name is Hector Delamere, instead of Hector Warren? Yes."

"That you are—Lord Delamere?"

He inclines his head slightly.

"Yes; Signa; but will that make any diffrence? No, no, it cannot! Why should it? You would not give me cause to hate my name and rank worse than I do?"

"Name and rank!" she says; then she smiles. I was not thinking of them," she says, simply, and with pure truth.

"Then you were thinking——"

He pauses, and in that moment of silence she remembers the story of the murdered man and the ruined girl—of Casalina—the name flashes on her brain in letters of fire. The man she loves and is plighted to is the Lord Delamere whose wickedness is in every man's mouth, whose very name she has learned to fear, and almost to detest. Her face grows deadly white and her breath comes slowly.

Signa," he says, and his own face is pale and dark, and his voice stern and grave—"Signa, I know what is passing through your mind; my love gives me the power of reading your every thought in your eyes. You are thinking of the evil you have heard of me. Is it not so?"

She does not speak, but a heavy sigh leaves her half-parted lips.

"I see!" he murmurs; "you believe it all—the idle gossip of a scandal-loving world, Signa!" and there is a world of tender reproach in his sad voice.

Her heart beats with a wild hope, and her lips quiver.

"It—it was not true, then?" she musters.

"True! Look at me, Signa!"

She raises her eyes slowly and fixes them upon him; then, with a low cry of exquisite delight and joy, she leans toward him, and he folds her in his arms.

"Oh, Hector, forgive—forgive me!" she pants, faintly. "Ah, how I have wronged you! I, who ought to have held your name stainless, though all looked as black as night against you! Forgive me, Hector!"

"Not that word from you, my pure, stainless angel!" he murmurs, huskily. "Ah, Signa, you have much to forgive, I nothing. Signa, let the past be buried between us. Enough that I am not guilty of the crimes"—and a smile crosses his face—"that dear old Lady Rookwell, half in jest, laid to my charge."

"Yes, yes, in jest—it was only in jest," says Signa, hurriedly. "I might have known it if—if I had known that you were the Lord Delamere of whom she spoke. But I did not; I never guessed it, though now it seems strange, stupidly strange that I did not."

"It is strange," he says, with a smile; "to me the disguise seemed so transparent as to be incapable of deceiving even the dullest. I suppose I don't look much like an old earl"—with a laugh—"or you got accustomed, all of you, to imagining a monster, and as I was not quite that, you accepted me for an honest man!"

Signa smiles; the color is coming back to her face, the happiness to her heart, and in her violet eyes shines the old, quiet joy in the passionate love which pours into them from his.

"And you are not sorry—you do not repent!" he says, with a smile, but still a little anxiously.

"No," she answers. "But—"

"Well?"

"But—ah, Hector, that cottage in the air was very nice."

"And will not Northwell Grange on solid earth be nice, too?" he demands.

"Nice is not the word," she says, then she sighs. "But—if you are the Earl of Delamere, I—ah, Hector, I shall make such a poor countess."

He laughs and holds her at arms' length, that he may scrutinize her with wistful, love-hungry eyes.

"Yes, a poor, plain, stupid young person, with no outward grace or charm—yes, you will make a poor countess!" Then he laughs again. "Poor foolish little bird," he says, "do you know that you will look just the type of the popular idea of a countess?—that there is not another girl in the room who would so fittingly in every way fill the place you have deigned to accept? No, in your heart you do not, but it is true, my darling. There is not a portrait of the dead-and-gone women of our race so noble and beautiful—"

"Hush, hush!" she whispers, putting her finger on his lip, but with a look of delighted joy in her eyes.

He kisses the gloved finger passionately.

"It is true, my darling—how could it be otherwise? You are your father's child, and he was one of nature's noblemen. Do you not remember how I admired and reverenced him? Yes, Signa, you will make something of the old title which I, alas! have dragged in the dirt, or left to grow rusty and tarnished. I have always disliked it—it has seemed to me like the worthless soil which encourages the growth of the toadstools; all sorts of parasites have been attracted to it; but now you will set a diamond in its forehead, as Tennyson says, and all will go well."

"Will it?" he says, thoughtfully, fingering the lappet of his coat. "If I could think so. "What is this, Hector?"

And she touches the broad blue ribbon that crosses his breast.

"That," he says, with a smile, "is the ribbon of the Order of the Knights of the Garter."

"Oh, yes, of course!" she says, with a smile. "Ah, you—you see I have not yet realized the greatness of your real state, Hector."

He laughs.

"I put it on because I wished to do you honor, my dearest, not for any vanity on my part. I longed to make myself feel some way, though only in a worldly sense, more worthy of you; and so I crowded this on."

"It has frightened them!" she says, with a smile. Then she arches her eyebrows. "Poor Aunt Podswell! Even in my bewilderment I could not help noticing her distress! Hector, it was not fair"

"No!" he says. "Listen while I explain, Signa: I came down here with the intention of just glancing at the old place, and directing it to be done up and seen to. I knew that if I came down in my proper person I should have all the good folks of these parts round me; and I don't like to be surrounded. Peace is the only joy, you know; I had been been here two or three days undetected and unsuspected, and was going again, when I met you on the beach. I fell in love with you at that moment. I don't know why; does any one ever know why? But that I loved you from that moment, I will always swear"

"Hector"

(To be continued.)

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Ayre's Cliff, Que., April 19.—(Special)—Mrs. W. Gomes Macdona, of The Farm, a member of one of the oldest families living in this neighborhood has consented to give the public the benefit of her experience with Dodd's Kidney Pills.

"My trouble started from overwork," Mrs. Macdona states, "and I suffered for two years. I was treated by a doctor, but the results were not satisfactory. My joints were stiff, I had cramps in my muscles, my sleep was broken and unrefreshing and I was heavy and sleepy after meals. I had bad headaches, my appetite was fitful and I was always tired and nervous. I was depressed and low-spirited, I had a bitter taste in my mouth in the mornings and I was often dizzy.

"I perspired with the least exertion and I often had sharp pressure or pain on the top of the head. Then rheumatism was added to my troubles. I have taken just two boxes of Dodd's Kidney Pills and they have done me good, not only in one way, but in many. Even my rheumatism is much better."

Mrs. Macdona's symptoms all showed that her kidneys were wrong. If you have similar symptoms try Dodd's Kidney Pills.

MAN IS SHORTER.

When Adam and Eve Lived They Were as Tall as Trees.

It was a French savant named Henrion, who 200 years ago gave to the world authoritative statements as to the height of Adam and Eve. He said that the father of the race was 123 feet 9 inches high and Eve 113 feet 9 inches. He noted that from the creation of these enlarged editions of humanity degeneration had been rapid; that Noah was only twenty-seven, Abraham only twenty and Moses but thirteen feet in height.

According to this French authority if the Christian dispensation had not arrested this decrease man by this time 200 years ago—would have been a mere microscopic object, and we may conclude that by our time he would not have been at all. M. Henrion did not give any explanation as to how he arrived at his estimate of the height of these ancients.

Perhaps the most gigantic story on record is that concerning an immense skeleton, said to have been in Sicily, which measured 300 feet in length. This story, however, carries its own refutation, as it is said that found beside this giant was his walking stick, which was thirty feet long and thick as a telegraph pole. A clever calculator made the estimate that a walking stick only thirty feet in length for a man who measured 300 feet would be as ridiculous as one of seven inches for a man of ordinary stature.

The head and the heart generally work in unison. About one man in a million can lose his heart without losing his head.

WHAT IS A COOK?

She is a Bacteriologist for One Thing—Read This and See.

Madame, do you know that you are a bacteriologist? The chances are you don't. Every time a woman goes into the kitchen to cook she becomes a bacteriologist in proportion as she is a good cook. Perhaps she will not call it that, but that is what she is, nevertheless.

It is well for people to understand that there is a lot of bacteriology about the kitchen and to study it as bacteriology. The process of making bread rise is innoculation, pure and simple. Bacteria is introduced into the mixture of salt and water and flour in the form of yeast, and this bacteria gets to work right away, forming a gas which causes the bread to rise. It is the heat and water that help things along. Mould and yeast belong to the same bacteriological families, and there are a lot of others of the same sort.

Of course most of us who cook don't know things by these terms. We do not know that when we put in the yeast we are inoculating the dough. And there may be a number of other forms of inoculation that we do not know, either.

But it is well for every woman to remember that she is the bacteriologist in charge of the family laboratory, and inform herself in ways the best she can find to the end that in her innoculations of the food with yeast and salt and other chemicals she doesn't introduce other things that will incubate into bacteria that are not nearly so healthful as the yeast that goes into the bread.

A clean kitchen and a clean cook make the finest sort of laboratory and bacteriologist for family uses.

He who does a good deed is instantly ennobled. He who does a mean deed is by the action itself, contracted.—Emerson.

A GOOD MEDICINE FOR THE SPRING

Do Not Use Harsh Purgatives—A Tonic Is All You Need.

Not exactly sick—but not feeling quite well. That is the way most people feel in the spring. Easily tired, appetite fickle, sometimes headaches, and a feeling of depression. Pimples or eruptions may appear on the skin, or there may be twinges of rheumatism or neuralgia. Any of these indicate that the blood is out of order—that the indoor life of winter has left its mark upon you and may easily develop into more serious trouble.

Do not dose yourself with purgatives, as many people do, in the hope that you can put your blood right. Purgatives gallop through the system and weaken instead of giving strength. Any doctor will tell you this is true. What you need in spring is a tonic that will make new blood and build up the nerves. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills is the only medicine that can do this speedily, safely and surely. Every dose of this medicine makes new blood which clears the skin, strengthens the appetite and makes tired, depressed men, women and children bright, active and strong. Mrs. Maude Begg, Lemberg, Sask., says: "I can unhesitatingly recommend Dr. Williams' Pink Pills as a blood builder and tonic. I was very much run down when I began using the Pills, and a few boxes fully restored my health."

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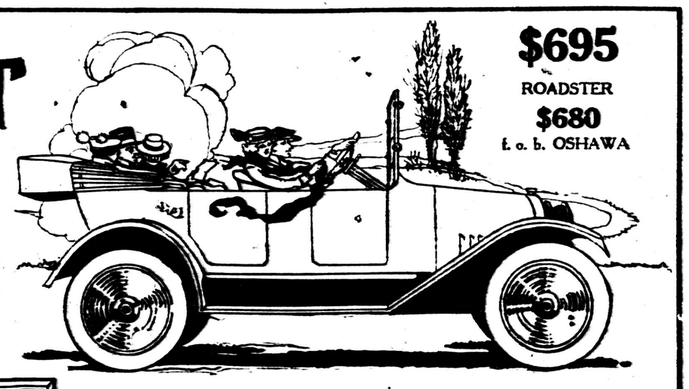

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