

## DESMOND'S LOVE.

## CHAPTER II.—Continued.

For, she was wont to argue, if a woman be really and truly handsome, she knows it; her glass, that trust of all flatterers, tells her pretty plainly that it is so; and she wants nothing further to convince her of the pleasant fact. If she be only good-looking, she naturally requires a heap of flattery to keep her in good humor with herself and her looks, and from falling into the belief that she is unpleasant and unattractive, and likely to be left on the shelf, and denied those little tender attentions so dear to the heart of woman.

"I will endeavor to help you to learn it as quickly as possible," he rejoined immediately with extreme coldness and hauteur, removing his arms from the back of her chair, and sauntering away with his head in the air, highly amazed and annoyed to think that any woman should snub him—address him in such a fashion.

He confined his conversation strictly to the male portion of the assembly, greatly to Miss Richmond's delight, as well as Miss Pallis's, though from entirely different reasons.

"Shall we see your elder son to-night?" questioned the latter in low tones of Mrs. Desmond.

"I hardly think so," returned the other reluctantly.

"I had hoped we should," continued Vera, looking earnestly at his mother, a totally different expression on her beautiful face from the haughty one that had disfigured it while she had been giving Clarence to understand that his attentions were not appreciated nor desired.

"So had I. I thought I could persuade him to come down. I did my best, but failed."

"His reluctance to meet people is unfortunate," observed Miss Pallis, whom Mrs. Desmond had taken into her confidence, and made acquainted with her hopes and fears with regard to her first-born, and her strong desire was to see him once more happy. "It argues a morbid tendency."

"I am afraid it does."

"That will be difficult to overcome."

"Difficult, but not impossible. Don't say you think it impossible," said the mother imploringly, looking at the bright beautiful girl with anxious eyes, for she counted largely on her assistance in driving away the melancholy that brooded over her son.

"Hardly anything is impossible to those who throw themselves heart and soul into the work to be done, and bring love—that powerful lever—to bear on the subject as well," she replied with animation.

"And we will do that," cried the mistress of the Chase joyfully. "At least," she added more soberly, "I shall. Of course, my boy being an utter stranger to you, you naturally cannot feel the same interest as I do in the matter."

"Don't say that," pleaded Vera, laying one slim hand, white as a snow-flake, on Mrs. Desmond's withered one. "The fact of his being your son makes me feel a great interest in him and all that concerns him."

"Thank you, my dear," murmured the elder lady brokenly. "This is very comforting," and she squeezed the white digits laid in her palm warmly.

"I will do anything—anything I can to help you. Only tell me what you would wish me to do, and I will do it."

It was on Mrs. Desmond's tongue to say, "Make him love you, and marry him—that will be his safest and surest salvation," but she checked the impulse and said quietly:

"I want to try and get him to accustom himself to mixing with young people. He has a morbid, exaggerated idea of his physical defect; could we get him to forget that in a measure, it would be a step in the right direction."

"Of course. How could we manage to get him to forget that for even a time?"

"He has one master-passion that even his great misfortune has not altered."

"What is that?"

"Music."

"Oh!"

"And you know, Vera, you have the voice of an angel."

"Oh, Mrs. Desmond?" exclaimed the girl, blushing rosy from brow to chin, and Clarence, watching her, and noticing the blush, wondered irritably what in the world they had to talk about in such a close confidential manner.

"You have, my dear," went on Mrs. Desmond firmly. "I should not think of flattering you in this matter, especially now. Such notes as yours are not often heard. I hope great things from it."

"How?" questioned Vera, looking at her with lovely eager eyes.

"I have told you he spends a portion of each day in the music-room."

"Yes."

"It is just under the one he uses as a sitting-room."

"Yes."

"Well, you must also spend a portion of each day in the music-room."

"Oh, Mrs. Desmond!"

"Now, my dear, if you are going to object to my plans at the outset, I may as well stop at once."

"No; please go on," said the other meekly. "Only I thought my being in the room where he spends some of his time daily might be objectionable to him."

"I hardly think so. He will hear you singing from the room above."

"True. Still he may keep away from his favorite amusement if he meets me unexpectedly there."

"I think—it is my decided opinion—that if he once meets you there, he will want to do so again," returned Mrs. Desmond significantly; so significantly that the red blood mantled again to Vera's brow, and the thickly-fringed lids drooped over the radiant eyes.

"What on earth can they be talking about?" muttered Clarence crossly, with far more annoyance and irritation than the occasion seemed to warrant.

"Eh?" murmured Miss Richmond enquiringly, who was kneeling on the hearth-rug at his feet, looking up at him with open adoration and admiration. "What did you say?"

"I did not say anything," he returned brusquely—"to you," he added in a lower tone, as he strode across the room. "Mother, when are you going to dress to-night?" he asked testily.

"By-and-by, dear; there is plenty of time."

"I hardly think there is," he went on quickly. "The first bell has gone."

"Has it really?"

"Yes, five minutes ago; and you know those girls," casting another unkindly glance at the hearth-rug, "will take at least an hour getting themselves into war paint."

"What an ungallant remark!" said Vera, feeling that she could not be too cool to the man who was playing the part of host to her.

"I did not include you in that speech," he returned sotto voce. "No one would be mad enough to think you would be long over your toilette. You know, 'Beauty unadorned, etc.' May I take you in to dinner?" he whispered, as he held the door open for her to pass through.

"I don't know," she hesitated.

"Don't refuse," he implored, and then, as she remained silent, he added, "Silence gives consent; I shall take you."

And very much against her will Miss Pallis, a little later on, found herself sitting at the young man's right hand, listening to a string of compliments and impassioned speeches, and soon became conscious that Miss Richmond was watching her and her companion with no kindly look; and remembering to have heard that there was a tenderness between her and young Desmond, she felt particularly uncomfortable, and wished he would transfer his tender speeches and ardent admiration to this pale little woman, who was evidently so devoured with jealousy that she could not pay attention to the conversation of her neighbor, like the foolish sentimental creature she was, for he was a Hussar officer, the only son of a fabulously wealthy merchant, and had a great admiration for this blue-eyed, pale-skinned, pocket Venus; while Clarence—unstable, unfaithful, fickle Clarence—was only a younger son, with a paltry five hundred a year, that would go nowhere in the buying of frills and furbelows, and keeping up a house and carriage; yet still, with the perversity of her sex, she turned a deaf ear to the gallant Hussar's tender speech, and watched Desmond, the younger, with all her might and main—a proceeding which was extremely disagreeable to him.

## CHAPTER III.

That night Romilly, as he sat moodily staring into the fire in the solitude of his rooms, with only his great stag-hound, Lassie, to keep him company, he heard a voice singing, "What are we waiting for, my heart and I?" in such a way that his listless attention was attracted, and he waited with some eagerness to hear the next song.

He was only gratified once more. The flute-like tones rose, fell, ebbed, to the strains of "Home, Sweet Home," and then all was silent.

He would not confess it to himself, still it was nevertheless true that the next evening he settled himself down earlier than usual in his easy-chair before the fire and did not provide himself with a book, as was his usual custom.

About half-past nine the singing commenced, and was longer continued, and every evening for a fortnight he heard the sweet strains, and grew to watch and wait for them. Yet all that time he did not say one word to his mother that could lead her to suppose he had heard or noticed the singing, but he steadily refused to come down and play the part of host to his guests.

At last, one wet day, when he had been unable to take his usual drive, he went down through the private passage leading from his suit of apartments to the music-room, and entering softly was half-way across to the organ before he was aware that it had a tenant.

On a music-stool, with her back towards him, sat a woman, the red glow of the firelight on her sunny hair and snowy skin, which the black velvet gown she wore, cut square on the neck and bosom, revealed.

She wore no ornaments save a bunch of vivid scarlet blossoms at her breast. The beautiful wavy hair was gathered in a crown-like twist on the top of the shapely head, one rounded arm supported it, the other held a sheet of music which she was studying attentively.

So absorbed was she, so still, that she might have been mistaken for a statue

carved in pink marble, save for the swell of her bosom as it rose and fell, disturbing the laces that concealed and yet displayed it.

For a full moment Desmond stood spell-bound, gazing at this lovely figure with its wealth of beauty, its inimitable grace, and then he turned to go, but his stick struck the leg of a chair sharply, and in a moment she had risen and was facing him, the great purple eyes seeking his with such interest, such an indefinable expression.

He was bewildered, confused, and stammered out some incoherent word of apology.

"It is I who should apologize," she said in clear sweet tones. "I have no right to intrude here at this time, only I heard some new music had come, and thinking you were out, I ventured here to see it before dinner. Will you forgive me?"

"There is nothing to forgive," he returned frigidly, recovering himself. "You have a perfect right to come here whenever you wish."

"I—I thought—" she began hesitatingly.

"That the bear was in his den, and not likely to leave it. You see, like other wild animals, I growl about at dusk."

"No—oh no! Don't speak like that," she implored, her great eyes full of such sympathy, if he would but have seen it, lingering on his handsome face in wonder. "How am I to speak then?" he demanded curtly, almost roughly. "I am not used to making pretty speeches similar to those you hear from the brainless society apes you like."

"I don't like society men as a rule," she said firmly.

"Indeed?" he retorted with a sneer. "Not too many of them, I suppose. You want a change."

"A change is always pleasant," she returned calmly, though the color flickered uncertainly in her fair cheek.

"Women generally think so," he returned bitterly; "especially where their lovers are concerned."

"Not all women where their lovers are concerned," she expostulated gently.

"Indeed?" he retorted cynically. "Then your experience has been different from mine. You are Miss Pallis, of course," he added abruptly.

"Yes," she acquiesced. "But—why of course?"

"From the description I had of you from my brother Clarence—a flattering description I assure you."

Miss Pallis grew distressingly rosy, to her own extreme annoyance, and Romilly, with a sarcastic laugh, turned to go, saying:

"I will not disturb your meditations; no doubt they are pleasant."

"Don't let me drive you away," she implored. "Won't you remain here now that you are down?"

But he refused, turning away from the lovely face, and pleading eyes, the gentle wooing voice; and going up to his dusky rooms, he took down a volume and tried to peruse it—tried only, because between him and the page came her face, with its pearly eyes, mobile lips, and frame of golden hair, blotting out for the first time for fifteen years that other dark beautiful visage that had wrought his ruin. For that alone he could have blessed her.

And with a sigh he put aside his book and tried to rest, doing nothing, and feeling weary of everything under the sun.

For many days after the meeting in the music-room he sedulously avoided going there, so great was his fear of encountering a contemptuous or even a pitying glance from his fellows.

His own opinion of himself was so poor; he thought he was only a wretched broken-down cripple, a thing to be gazed at with wonder and abhorrence, and treated with scant courtesy by others.

He forgot his handsome face, his square shoulders, his firm-set head and noble appearance, and did not think that the mere fact of his being master of Desmond Chase and a fine income would gain him the toleration, if not the admiration, of most fair ones, and secure him from the rudeness of his own sex.

He despised himself, remembering what he had been—so strong, active, perfect in physique; knowing what he was, a cripple with a useless withered limb—and thought others would do likewise, and so he shrank more than ever from intercourse with his fellows.

He was, however, fated to meet Miss Pallis.

One chill afternoon as he descended from his phaeton, he saw her coming in his direction.

For a moment he felt inclined to hurry in, and escape up the narrow staircase leading to his rooms; but seeing she had something to say, he waited till she stood beside him.

"We meet again—Beauty and the Beast," he said mockingly, as he lifted his hat, and looked at her, standing there with the red glow of the western sun upon her, throwing up into vivid relief against the snowy background her warm perfect loveliness; and the sight of it made him feel more bitter and wretched than usual—realise more fully all the joys of life that he had lost, all the happiness which would never be his. "These accidental meetings threaten to become quite frequent."

"This is not accidental," she returned in clear vibrating tones, that somehow

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Whereas, John Stevenson of Richibucto in the County of Kent, Crown Land Surveyor, and William Hudson of the same place, merchant, executors of the last will and testament of John Stevenson, late of Richibucto, aforesaid, deceased, have prayed that their accounts of the administration of the estate of the said John Stevenson, deceased, should be proved and allowed and that all parties interested in said estate should be cited to appear to attend the passing and allowing thereof.

You are therefore required to cite the heirs and all parties interested in the estate of the said John Stevenson, deceased, to appear before me at a Court of Probate to be held at Richibucto, in and for said county on Tuesday, the 30th day of June next at 11 o'clock in the forenoon at the office of the Registrar of Probate for said county for the purpose of passing and allowing the said accounts.

Given under my hand and the seal of the said Court this 23rd day of May, A.D. 1891.

HENRY H. JAMES, Judge of Probate of Kent Co.

C. RICHARDSON, Registrar of Probates County of Kent.

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