

(CONTINUED FROM TENTH PAGE.)

would you like to be bothered by a man who won't take 'No'?

"If I were in your place my dear, I should like it very much," replied the frank lady, "especially if the man were Lord Lorrimore."

#### CHAPTER VII.

Sir Jordan remained for some few minutes where Lord Lorrimore and Audrey had left him, apparently regarding the crowd with a pleasant amiably interested attention, but in reality scarcely conscious of its presence, so busy was he with his thoughts.

When asked whether he thought he should win a certain battle, Napoleon replied: "Yes because I intend doing so."

Jordan Lynne intended marrying Audrey Hope. Not because he loved her; for, though he admired her—and would have been as insensible as a block of wood if he had not—he certainly did not love her. There was only one individual in the world Sir Jordan loved and that was Jordan Lynne, and he loved him with such an intense and absorbing love as to leave no room for caring for any one else.

Audrey was not only the most beautiful girl he ever knew, but one of the richest, and it was because she was rich and the Grange estate ran parallel with Lynne that he had decided to marry her. The fact that he was thirty and Audrey only nineteen did not frighten him in the least; nor did the other too patent fact, that Audrey repelled his skillful advances, discourage him. Years ago, when a tall, gawky youth, he had looked on at Audrey and Neville played together, and he had made up his mind that she should be his—Jordan's—wife, and not Neville's; and it was that determination which, joined with other reasons, had prompted him to raise a quarrel between Neville and his father, and caused the latter's disinheritation.

Neville had disappeared as completely as if he were dead, but Jordan did not seem to make much progress with Audrey. Whenever he got into conversation with her it was of Neville she wanted to talk and insisted upon talking, as she had done this evening; and though her persistence in refusing to forget this scapegrace made Jordan hate his brother worse than ever, he never allowed any sign of his fraternal feelings to reveal themselves.

Now, seeing that he was possessed of immense wealth, it was rather surprising that he should be so desirous of acquiring more by marrying Audrey Hope, the heiress.

But Jordan had his own reasons for being particularly anxious in this matter; and that evening, notwithstanding Audrey's coolness and preoccupation of mind when they were talking of anything else but Neville, Jordan, instead of being discouraged, was more determined than ever to have his way. He knew that Lord Lorrimore loved her, and though she had refused him, loved her still and hoped to win her; but Jordan did not care for that. Ever so many men loved her and wanted to marry her, and there is safety in numbers.

So he sat for half an hour, nursing one leg and talking to one and another of the many who were eager to be seen in converse with Sir Jordan Lynne, in the pleasantest manner, but watching Audrey covertly all the while. Then he made his way to Lady Marlow, said good-night, and went down the stairs.

It was a beautiful night, or rather, early morning, and Jordan stood and looked at the stars for a moment or two and decided to walk home. He had not to go very far for his rooms were in Audley street, and Lady Marlow's house was in Grosvenor Square, and it was scarcely worth while taking a cab for so short a distance.

Most men would have lighted a cigar, but Jordan did not smoke, and, as has been said, had so small vices; and so, with his hands folded behind him, he walked slowly along, looking at the pavement instead of the sky, his head bent as usual in deep thought—so deep indeed that he did not hear light footsteps behind him, or know that he was followed until he felt a hand touch his arm.

He started and turned, then fell back a step, staring at the pale face of the woman who had stopped him.

It was as sad as well as a pale face, with hollow eyes that spoke of pain and misery, and lips that had grown wan and tremulous with sorrow and trouble; and yet, alas! it was the face of a woman who was still young and had once, and not long since, been beautiful.

She was poorly dressed, but decently, and the worn black shawl was held by one thin hand as if to partly conceal her face.

"Jordan," she said in a low voice.

Sir Jordan Lynne drew his arm away and looked at her under his lowered lids with the expression which the one who has injured always bears toward the one upon whom the injury has been inflicted.

"Rachel, what are you doing here—how did you come?" he asked, his voice growing harder with each word, and he looked about him as if he feared they should be seen.

"You ask me that!" she replied, her dark eyes fixed on his face. "How did I come?—by foot. I have walked all these weary miles—but you do not care how I came. Why have you made it necessary for me to come? Why?" she stopped and put her hand to her throat as if the agitation caused by the sight of him were overpowering her.

Sir Jordan glanced up and down the street apprehensively and smothered an oath between his thin lips.

"This—is this absurd and—childish of you, Rachel," he said at last. "You got my letter?"

"Yes, I got your letter," she said in the same low, despairing voice. "Surely the cruellest letter a man ever wrote to the woman he once loved. Jordan, have you—have you forgotten all that you promised me—your solemn promise? It is not long ago—not so long! You can not mean what you said in that letter—you can not have the heart, even you, to treat me so cruelly?"

Jordan fidgeted with his feet, keeping an eye on the street, turned up the collar of his coat, and pulled his hat over his brows.

"My good Rachel," he said, "you—you can't expect me at this time of night, and in the open street, to stand here talking with you. We shall be seen and—and—"

"You did not mind being seen with me two years ago, Jordan?" she said with sad approach.

"Didn't I?" thought Jordan, but he said aloud: "That was all very different; circumstances have altered, and—and—"

He saw some of the people coming from Lady Marlow's walking up the street, and turned upon her with smothered anger.

"Follow me toward the park."

And he walked away with his head bent even lower than usual.

The woman followed him with the weary gait which speaks of mental as well as physical weariness, and Jordan, stopping in the darkest corner he could find, turned and confronted her.

"Now, Rachel," he said, with something approaching his usual smoothness, "tell me what this extraordinary proceeding means."

"Is it so extraordinary, Jordan? Did you think that I should receive that letter and do nothing? that I should submit to be treated like a dog—ah, worse!—a toy you had got tired of?"

"Hush, hush!" he said, for her sad voice was dangerously distinct, and a policeman had paused in his heavy tramp and looked at them.

"For Heaven's sake, my good girl, don't make a scene; it can do no possible good; quite the reverse, in fact, and, Confound it! you have attracted attention already here take my arm; we must walk on, I suppose."

She declined his arm with a gesture, and walked beside him, her trembling hand holding her shawl together.

"Now tell me all about it, and what—what you hoped to effect by dogging me in this way?" He said, with barely concealed impatience. "And, for goodness' sake, speak quietly and don't give way to heroics! I thought I had explained everything in my letter."

"That cruel letter!" she exclaimed, her voice trembling. "How could you write it, Jordan, knowing, remembering, all that we were to each other, and so short a time ago?"

"What is the use of harping on the past?" he said, with a sudden burst of irritation, which he subdued by a palpable effort. "The past, my dear Rachel, and the present are very different things. When you and I—er—er—amused ourselves by playing lovers, two years ago, down at that infernally stupid watering-place, I was only Jordan Lynne, the son of a man who might disinherit me at any moment; and you—"

"And I?" she said in a voice hoarse with suppressed emotion. "What was I, Jordan? An innocent, ignorant girl who believed in and trusted the man who told her that he loved her. Yes, trusted, Jordan."

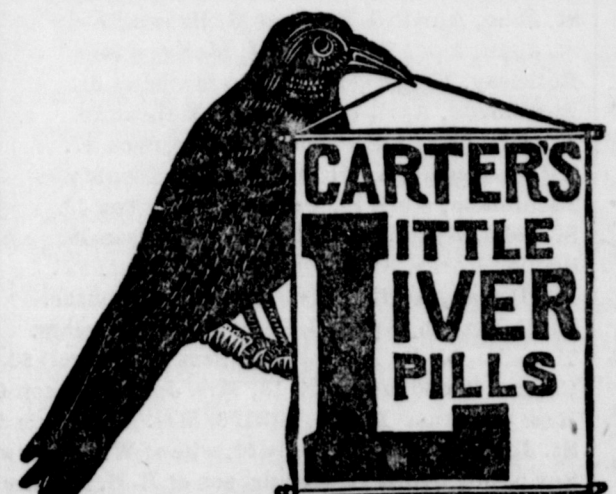
Sir Jordan bit his lip.

"All that, as I say, was two years ago, and—and, in fact, the dreams you and I indulged in can not be realized. Great heavens!—it was seldom Sir Jordan permitted himself to use strong language, and his doing so on this occasion showed how much upset he was by this inconvenient interview. 'Great heavens! you—you didn't suppose that I was going to marry you after—after—'

"After you became a rich man with a title," she finished, with a catch in her voice, her dark eyes fixed on his face, which looked mean and sneaking at that moment, and quite unlike the intellectual countenance which shone in the House of Commons. "Yes, Jordan, that is what I thought—what you led me to think when you promised me with oaths that would have deceived any girl, Jordan." She caught his arm. "You will not be unjust, so cruel, so heartless, as to desert me now?" and she stood still, panting and searching his pale, downcast face for one faint sign of relenting.

He shook her hand off his arm.

"Desert you? Certainly not!" he said. "I am not capable of such—such conduct!"



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As I told you in my letter, in which I assure I endeavored to be explicit enough, and which, I think you must have understood—"

"Ah, yes!" she said, with a heavy sigh; "it was easy to understand."

"Very well, then," he resumed. "I pointed out to you plainly that it was not possible that you—well, under the circumstances—really unreasonable wishes could be realized. I—I have no intention of marrying. But, as I said before, I am anxious—"

"My dear Rachel!"—his voice grew softer and smoother, and very like the voice in which he addressed a charity meeting—"that your future should be provided for. I mentioned a certain sum of money which I deemed sufficient—amply sufficient—to maintain you in—er—comfort, and I expressed a hope which you will allow me to repeat, that some day, and before very long, I trust, you may meet with some honest, respectable man who will make you a devoted and affectionate husband. One moment, please," he continued, smoothly, for she had opened her quivering lips as if about to interrupt him. "I think, if you will consider the whole case from a—er—rational point of view, you will admit that I have done all that lay in my power to—"

"atone for the—er—folly of the past. I certainly expected that you would have received my offer in the spirit which dictated it, and—er—would have accepted it with, it not gratitude (for I am aware, my dear Rachel, that we must not look for gratitude in this world), at least with satisfaction. It appears, however, that my not unreasonable expectations were doomed to disappointment, and instead of acquiescing in the—er—decrees of Providence, and falling in with my view of our mutual obligations, you have thought fit to follow me to London, and here, in the public streets—my dear Rachel, I did not deem you capable of it—to force yourself upon me, and—er—make a scene."

He had finished at last, and stood looking at her steadily from under his lids, an expression of mock indignation and long suffering on his pale face. But he could not meet her eyes—eyes which had grown darker with the sombre light of an injured woman's anguish and scorn.

"Come," he said, "let us part friends, my dear Rachel. We will not exchange any more harsh words. You will see the wisdom of the step I have taken to—end our little friendship, and I am sure you know me better—"

"Know you? Yes, I know you now!" came pantingly from her white lips. "I know you now! Oh!"—she raised her clinched hands and let them fall again heavily—"oh, that I should ever have been deceived by you! How—my God! how could I ever have believed in you for one single moment? Why couldn't I see you were a devil and a monster instead of a man? But I was alone in the world and innocent—no father, no mother, no friend to warn or guard me, and—"

She broke down and leaned against the park railing, covering her face with her hands and shaking with sobs that brought no relief.

Jordan gnawed at his under lip and looked round watchfully and anxiously.

"Come, come, my dear Rachel," he said, soothingly. "Permit me to say that you take too black a view of—of the case. Now, let us be more cheerful. Your future, as I have pointed out, is provided for. The money I have offered you—"

She turned on him so suddenly that the amiable Sir Jordan started back from her flashing eyes and upheld trembling hand.

"Money! Do you dare to think I would touch it—that I would accept one penny? No, not if I were starving! You offer me money! Jordan Lynne, you don't know what you are doing! You are driving a broken hearted woman desperate. Desperate—do you hear? Do you know what that means—do you?" She drew nearer to him and glanced into his shrinking eyes. "You, you coward!" She drew a long breath. "With all my misery, in this hour of my humiliation, the bitterest pang of all is the thought—the thought that burns, burns into my heart—that I once trusted you and loved you! And you offer me money—the woman who should be your wife—she whom you have blighted and deserted! Look at me, Jordan—look well at me. You remember what I was—I've heard from your own lips often enough—those lying lips—that I was pretty, beautiful! Look at me now! Look at your handiwork!" She drew the shawl from her white face distorted by passionate despair and indignation. "Do you think money can restore me to what I was—give me back all I have lost—all you have robbed me off? No, not all the riches of the world! There is only one thing you can do for me, now that will never did mean to make me your wife—you can kill me! You shrink from that?" for Jordan, biting his lips, had shrunk. "Is it worse to kill the body or the soul? What is there left for me but to die?" Her voice broke into a wail—a moan that might have touched the heart of a savior—then suddenly grew stern and hard and determined. "But, no; I will not;—I will not die! I will live, Jordan, for the hour in which God shall strike the balance between you and me! The time will come—"

"—she struck her clinched hands together—"will come, sooner as you may"—Jordan was not sneering; he was far too uncomfortable to manage a sneer—"and when it comes I will show you as much mercy and pity as you have this night shown me!"

She looked at him full in the eye, her face distorted by the conflicting emotions—despair, resentment, and humiliation—which tortured her, then, dragging the shawl around her, turned and left him. Before she had gone many yards he saw her stagger and fall against the railing, by which she supported herself by one hand. Sir Jordan Lynne did not go to her assistance, but waited until she had recovered and moved on again. Then he too turned on his way home. He was very much annoyed, very much upset, indeed. He had actually offered this foolish young creature, who really had no claim upon

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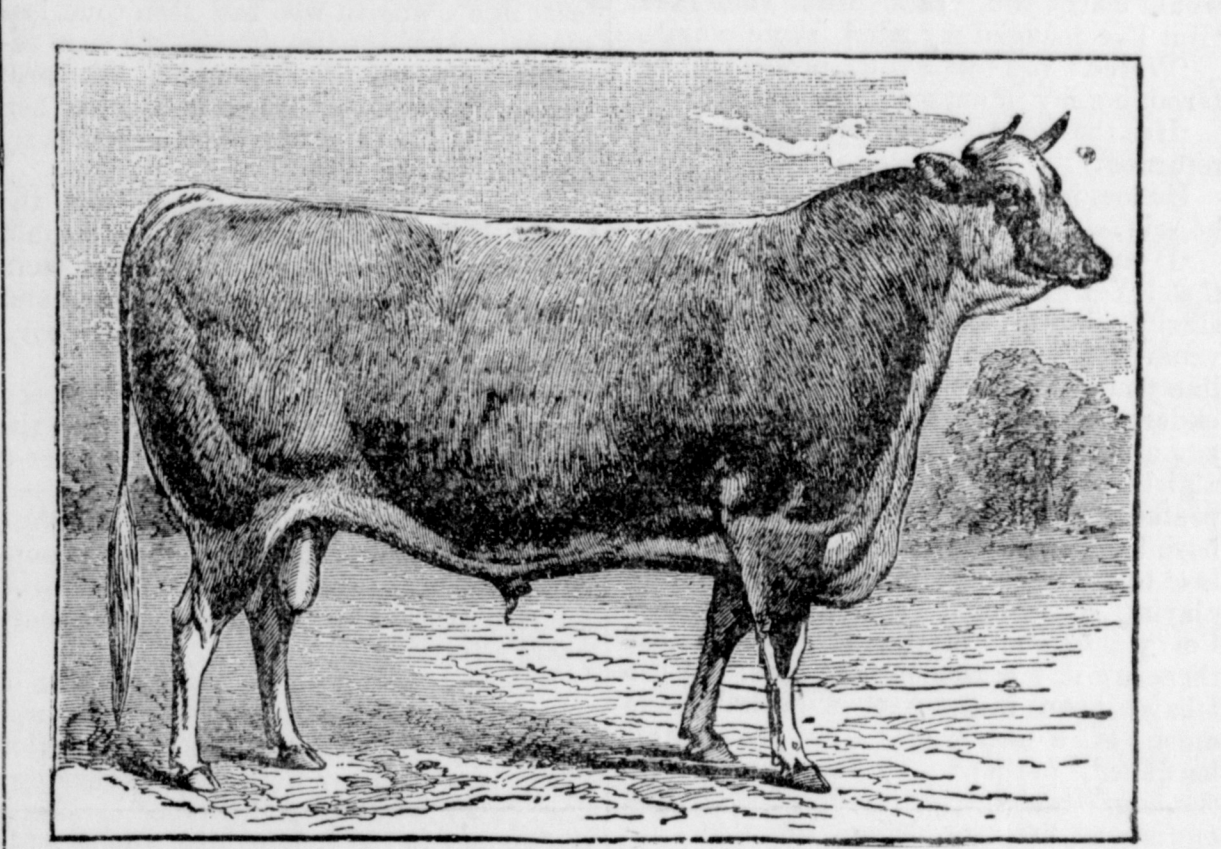
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him, fifty pounds a year, and she had treated him thus!

It was quite an agitated face upon which the policeman, who had been watching the interview from the corner, turned his lantern. He recognized Sir Jordan and saluted him, and Sir Jordan smoothed the harassed lines from his face and acknowledged the salute graciously.

"Hope that young woman hasn't been annoying you, sir?" said the constable.

"No, no," replied Jordan; "she is the daughter of an old pensioner—the daughter of a servant in our family, and I am sorry to say she has fallen into evil ways. I have just been saying a few words in season, constable, but I am afraid—"

and he shook his head and signed. "If it you should meet with her lurking about near my place—perhaps it will be as well to point out to her that—ahem!—the police have instructions to protect persons from annoyance. You understand me, I have no doubt?"

The policeman's hand, with Jordan's half sovereign in its palm, went to his helmet. "I understand, sir," he said. "I'll give her a word of warning if I see her loitering about."

"Thank you. Good-night, constable," murmured the good and strictly moral young baronet; and with a glance behind him to ascertain if Rachel was in sight or not, he opened his door with a latch key and passed in to the repose which so estimable a gentleman deserved.

It was on this same night—the night Jordan had turned a deaf ear to the prayer of the girl he had ruined, that Neville, his half-brother, the scapegrace of the family, as Jordan called him, had spent every penny he possessed in the purchase and rescue of the orphan of Lorn Hope Camp.

(To be continued.)

"if this continues we shall all be in heaven before to-morrow morning." The chaplain, horrified cried out, "The Lord forbid!"

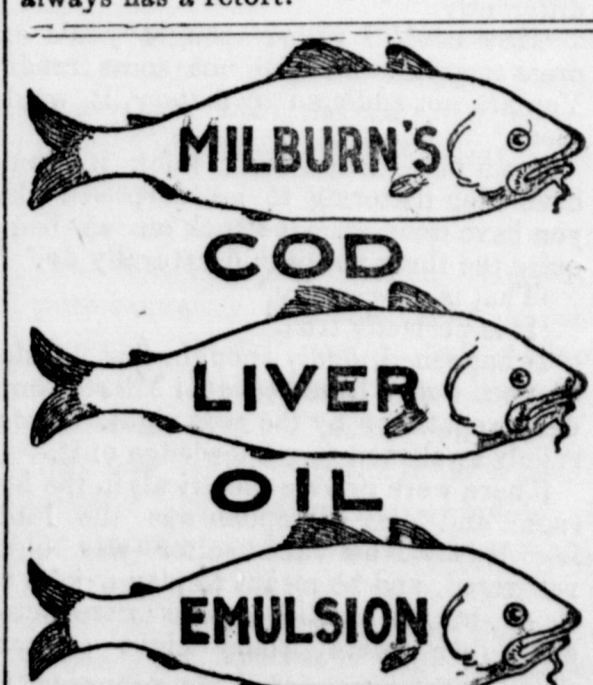
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