# PROGRESS, SATURDAY, JUNE 24 1899.

'Twas in September.

### CHAPTER I.

10

#### AN UNEXPECTED RETURN.

when he thinks I am far away in another asleep. part of the world !' said young Lord Lovel to himself, as he passed, unperceived, through the high iron gates of his childhood's home-Briancourt.

so he entered his father's domain, and disappeared among the trees, without being een by the lodge-keepers.

His father, Hubert Dunallen, ninth Earl of Brianconrt, had been, in his youth, one of the handsomest men in London society; and though no longer young, was hand some enough still at forty-five to win the heart of any woman, and to be loved for his own sake, and not solely for the broad acres of Briancourt and its princely rent- have been proud to disp'ay. roll.

was never even discussed by the gossips. | self, but in a perfect audible tone.

If he had meant to take a second wife argued the world, he would hardly have remained a widower for more than twenty blue that looked suspiciously wideawake, The butler will wonder whatever has beyeras, the first Lady Briancourt having and answered, calmly, but with a malicious died, when almost a child giving birth to smile that brought two wonderful dimples their only child.

At the time when this story opens, Cuthbert Dunallen, Lord Lovel, had been absent from England for nearly two years, during that time the earl had recieved letters from him at various intervals.

The last letter that had reached the earl bore an Italian postmark. That was more than three months ago now, and his lord ship would certainly have begun to feel anxious on his son,s account had his fectly-nay, exquisitely-proportioned, mind not happened at this time to and not a child as he had at first amagined, be much occupied ba a matter he now realized. which is generally allowed to be the most important in a man's life.

It was glorious September weather, golden, mellow, invigorating, and yet so warm that, but for the rich russet tints of the toliage, and the gorgeous glowing of the Virginia creeper that clothed the old feathery curls of palest gold that trolicked grey terrace, the season might have been mistaken for early summer. Slowly the young man ascended the flight of stone steps leading to this terrace, and paused there-vaguely perplexed.

the expression of his face, surprise had reached its culminating point. Between two elm trees a hammock had

Such as apparition in his father's garden, where the studious and highly-cultured earl was wont to walk, book in hand, and revel in the classic lore of Homer and The gates he had found standing open, Euripedes, might well reduce his son to a state of stupefaction.

For a moment he stood gazing down as if fascinated at the lovely little creature.

She was clad in a loose white gown, a sort of floating, much be-frilled garment, that, to his uninitisted masculine eyes, looked like a tangle of lace and blue ribbon.

From the hem of the skirt peeped a tiny slippered foot that Cinderella herself might 'Whose youngster can this be, I wonder,

But the chance of his marrying again | and how comes she here ?' he said to him-

At the sound of his voice the fair sleeper opened her eyes-sweet eyes of heavenly into play-

'I am not a youngster, as it happens, and I came here because such was my good pleasure. You, I think, are Lord Lovel. I recognise you from your father's description of you.'

She sprang lightly from the hammock as she spoke, and he saw standing before him the very emallest woman he had ever looked upon-for that she was a woman, per-

Her figure was fairy-like, her face of a delicate pink-and-white, her eyes of a loveher features tiny and without fault.

'And when did the wedding take place?' asked Lord Lovel.

have heard nothing about the whole affair.' pain.'

Not so very extraordinary, considering that the 'wooin', weddin', and a',' was Lovel, with a laugh. 'At the end of May | nerself P I went for a cruise in the Medtierranean, father undouotedly wrote, acquainting me of the quiet. romantic hour, or the un-'How surprised the dear old dad will be been slung, and in the hammock lay a of his intended marriage, is now waiting expected apparition of this young man with to see me walk in upon him so suddenly, small, golden-haired girl, apparently fast for me at the last address I gave him in the eyes of a poet. Italy. You mustn't suppose, Miss Fane.

that I grudge the dear old dad his happiness. When I have been absent from heme for so many months at a time. I have often wondered why it was that he never showed any inclination to marry again; but, somehow, he never seemed to care much for women's society. Your cousin must have been quite an exceptional wo- passed over man to have allured him from his aliegisnce that morning. to solitude and his beloved books.'

'She is an exceptional woman in every way, Lord Lovel,' was the young girl' quiet reply.

'However you will see her to night, so that yon will be able to judge for yourself.' 'At what hour do you expect them to

arrive ?' 'Not till eight. What time is it now ?'

'A quarter past six,' said his lordship, as he glanced at his watch.

'Then I vote we go in and have tea. come of me. Did you happen to see him, or any of the servants, as you went past the letters I want to give him that have arrived house ?'

'No; I looked into the three rooms opening on to the terrace, but not a sign oi a human being did I see. I began to think the place was bewitched, like the tairy palace of the sleeping beauty, and when I came down here and caught sight of you lying in the hammock, I telt convinced of it.

'In that case you must be Prince Charming who woke the sleeping princess, and broke the spell with-

Then Juliet stopped short, and blushed as red as any of the roses that bloomed around her, as she, checking herself just in lustrous blue, her nose just a trifle retrous- | time, remembered how it was the magic ell had been broken, and the princess awakened from her charmed slumberedby the prince's kiss. Her companion, however, did not notice her embarrassment, for he had turned away, and was lost in thought. .Madalen Fane !' he repeated to himself, being under the impression that such had been her maiden name. Strange that he too, should love a Magdaten. I wonder darkness, and came to a standstill at the what the dear old dad will say when I tell him there will be soon another wedding in the family ? Yes; I shall just stay here a couple of days, and then run over to Ireland and find out what can be the meaning of my Magdalen's long absence.' Juliet Fane and Lord Lovel had tea together in the drawing room-the latter having been warmly welcomed back by the old servants, who were all surprised and delighted to see bim.

sound; then, as suddenly, the exquisite clamour all but ceased, and the bird, as if 'On the twentieth of August, and the exhausted with its wild burst of exuberance, I was out of danger, I thought it better bridal party left at once for Paris; but it sang on, but more softly, as if in a dream, to say nothing about my illness to you, exhausted with its wild burst of exuberance, I was out of danger, I thought it better seemed extraordinary that you should 'without passion, yet with something of knowing how horribly alarmed you would

Were all evenings like this evening ? wondered Juliet, or could it be that the done in so short a time,' replied Lord change she was conscious of lay only in

Perhaps it was the effect of the sunset, so that it is quite possible the letter my or the nightingale's song, or the influence you. On the voyage back, we did not

Or, perhaps, that moment which comes sooner or later to every man and woman, had arrived for her, when the heart stirs and flutters faintly with a new and strange unrest that seems like happiness, yet is not wholly devoid of pain.

However or whatever it might be, Juliet Fane was conscious that a change had fast asleep in a hammock, and mistook her passed over her since the sun had risen for a child.

She seemed to have stepped suddenly into another world, and something told her she would never be the same glad, careless, light-hearted girl again.

Eight o'clock struck.

'I had no idea it was so late,' exclaimed Juliet, started out of her reverie. 'The travellers will soon be here now, and I think, if you will excuse me, I will walk across to the Dower House. My father went up to London yesterday, and he is re turning by the same train as the earl and his oride. The carriage will drop him at home on the way here, and there are some during his absence. You won't mind my leaving you ?'

Well, the best of friends must part sometimes, you know,' answered the young man, adding, with a laugh, 'I will try meanwhile and make myself at home.'

He escorted her as far as the bridge that led across the river to the Dower House; then, having lingered to watch the dainty little white-robed figure disappear, he turned and walked slowly back to the Court.

Over the tree tops of the plantation the mcon was slowly rising in solemn grandeur suffusing the atmosphere with a silvery haze, seen through which Braincourt appeared quite spectral, like a haunted mansion in a ghostly legend. As he paused for a moment on the lawn, the sounds of approaching wheels became, faintly at first, then more distinctly, audible.

name of Claude Reynolds. As soon as recovered consciou.ness, and realized that

'That is why I went for a cruise in the Mediterranean before returning home, as I had previously intended, In May. I wanted to recruit, and look a little less like a corpse before I showed myself to touch at Naples, though I guessed some letters might be lying there, waiting for me. I came straight home, via Marseilles. Imagine my astonishment when I was told the news-

'Who told you ?'

'A young lady, named Miss Juliet Fane. 'Ab, yes ! my dear Magdalen's cousin -a most charming girl,' said the earl. 'She is indeed ! I discovered her lying

Lord Briancourt laughed heartily at this. She gave me some tes, and made things generally pleasant for me,' continued the young man. 'I only parted from her about a quarter-of-au-hour ago, when she went back to the Dower House to meet her father.

'Yes, we left him there on his way home from the station; but both he and his daughter will be here presently to dinner. We shall now require an extra knite and fork—luck in odd numbers.' Then turn-ing to his wife, the earl added, tenderly: 'You are very silent, Magdalen. '1 am atraid the long journey has tired you.' 'I am tired' replied her ladyship, sup-

pressing a yawn. 'And now, as I daresay you and yous son have a good deal to say to each other, alter being separated for so long, I think I will leave you, and rest a little before dinner

'We have nothing to say that you wouldn't be welcome to hear, my dear Magdalen, said the earl, the tone of his voice betraying the disappointment he felt at, what seemed to him, a great lack of warmth in his young wife's welcome of his well-beloved and long-absent son; but, as you are tired, you had certainly better lie down for a little while It is understood that there is to be no dressing for dinner to-night.'

With these words. Lord Briancourt held open the door, and his wife gathering ner sables more closely round her, swept out of the room, without a glance at the young-

The French windows all stood wide open, and yet nowhere could he perceive sight or sound of human presence.

Lord Lovel peeped into the dining-room. Nobody was there, but the table, exquisitely decorated with hot house flowers and terns-as it for a dinner-party-was spread out for four persons.

Who could the four persons be? he wondered, more and more perplexed.

into the adjoining library, which had always been his tather's favorite resort, but the reading chair in front of the big oak table was empty.

The apartment was unoccupied.

A glance into the drawing-room showed the young man a profusion of flowers arranged with evident care and taste, the grand piano open, with a song upon it, which someone had apprrently been singing recently; and, stranger still, by the fireplace a woman's work-basket, out ot which a strip of urfinished embroidery had rolled on to the carpet.

Signs of a woman's habitual presence in his father's house !

His father who, courteous as he was, did not care for women's company.

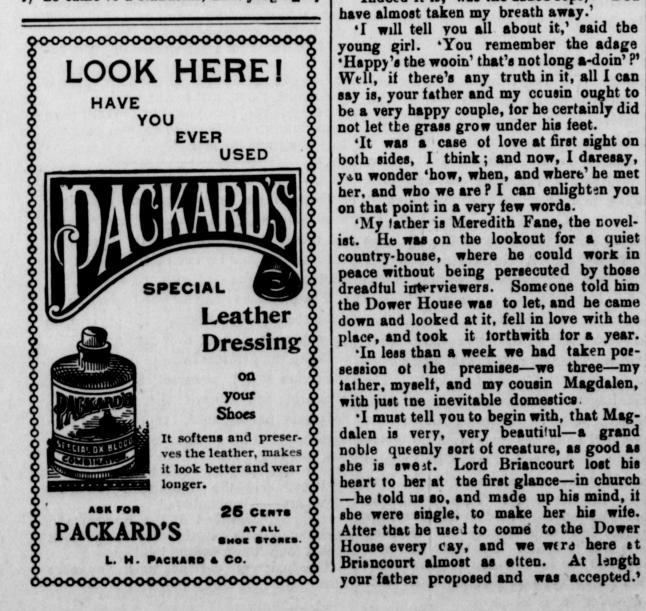
What did it mean?

Lord Lovel felt more and more mystified. Moving to the piano, he took up the song and read the title-"Do You Remember ?'-and in one corner a Christian name scribbled in pencil, 'Magdalen.'

'Magdalen-Magdalen!' repeated the young man to bimself, tenderly, as it he tound pleasure in pronouncing the syllables What a strange coincidence !

And a very sweet, yet half melancholy, smile played round his lips for a moment. Then, laying aside the song, he stepped out once again on to the terrace.

Descending the steps that led to the lawn, the young man crossed it with his long, leisurely stride, and passed through the shrubbery, intending to take a short cut to the servants' quarters; but suddenly he came to a standstill, and, judging by



It was a dear little face, winsome, pathetic, playful, imperious, rogueish, and impertinent by turns, and the clustering all over her small, shapely head seemed to give the finishing touch to the prettiest picture Lord Lovel thought he had ever seen.

'And now,' added the damsel, demurely, 'I suppose you are dying with curiosity to know 'whose youngster I am,' as you ao elegantly expressed it a few moments ago. Oh ! pray, don't apologise; it's not the first time I've been mistaken for a child.' Her companion laughed, and then she

laughed, and they both laughed in chorus, and, as there is nothing which so quickly establishes a friendly tooting between two persons brought face to face Crossing the toom, he looked through for the first time, as a divided joke. however small it may be, Lord Lovel and Miss Fane were not long in making acquain ance, and, before an hour had elapsed, both felt as if they had known each other for grounds. vears.

> CHAPTER II. A DREAM AND THE AWAKENING.

'I think I know your Christian name, at any rate,' said the young man, after a few moments' silence, during which they had wandered into the rose garden.

'Do you ? Let's hear now; what is it ?' 'Magdalen !' A merry laugh bubbled from her rosy

lips.

'Mistake number one ! my name is Juliet, as it happens-Juliet Fane; Magdalen is the name of my cousin-Lady Briancourt.'

'Lady Briancourt !' echoed her companion, looking bewildered. What Lady Briancourt ?'

Well, there is only one lady of that name that I know of, and she is your father's wife, Lord Lovel.

'My-father's-wife !' sgain echoed the young man, more bewildered than ever. 'I really must ask you to explain '

'I will with pleasure ; it is simple enough The earl was married to my cousin a month ago. They have been away on their honeymoon ever since, but we expect them back today. But surely this can be no news to you-Lord Briancourt's son P'

'Indeed it is,' was the dazed reply. 'You have almost taken my breath away.'

'I will tell you all about it,' said the young girl. 'You remember the adage 'Happy's the wooin' that's not long a-doin' ?" Well, if there's any truth in it, all I can say is, your father and my ccusin ought to be a very happy couple, for he certainly did not let the grass grow under his feet.

'It was a case of love at first sight on both sides, I think; and now, I daresay, yeu wonder 'how, when, and where' he met her, and who we are ? I can enlighten you on that point in a very few words.

'My father is Meredith Fane, the novelist. He was on the lookout for a quiet country-house, where he could work in peace without being persecuted by those dreadful interviewers. Someone told him the Dower House was to let, and he came down and looked at it, fell in love with the place, and took it torthwith tor a year. 'In less than a week we had taken poesession of the premises-we three-my tather, myself, and my cousin Magdalen, with just the inevitable domestics. 'I must tell you to begin with, that Magdalen is very, very beauti'ul-a grand noble queenly sort of creature, as good as she is swest. Lord Briancourt lost his heart to her at the first glance-in church -he told us so, and made up his mind, it she were single, to make her his wife. After that he used to come to the Dower House every cay, and we were here at

once."

Then the two who had so strangely met and made acquaintance strolled out into garden and wandered about the

Neither of them ever forgot that evening, so still, and sweet, and fragrant with the scent of flowers ; but far, indeed, were from anticipating the tragic discovery with which it was to close, and which each moment that passed brought nearer and nearer As for Juliet Fane, she felt happier than

she had ever felt in her life before, and wondered, with a vague and dreamy surprise, what could be the cause of it.

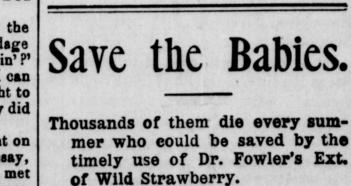
It seemed to her as if the grand old garden of Briancourt had never looked as it face. looked tonight, unearthly, unreal, like a garden one sees in a dream-not a leaf or lower stirring.

Was the old fairy story of the Sleeping Beauty being verified after all, and was Cuthbert Dunallen, Lord Lovel, the 'Prince Charming' of the old world legend, who had come from foreign lands - his steps led by Fate-to wake his destined bride to lite and love ?

Who can say ? for such things have been and the ways of Fate are unsearchable.

A protound stillness reigned, broken only by the drowsy twitter of birds, the stirring of the leaves, and the soft, cool splash of the fountain on the lawn, that the dew was beginning to spangle with its sparkling gems.

Suddenly, from the distant rose thickets, came the voice of the nightingale, filling the twilight hush with a flood ot sweetest



There is not a mother would be just like you.' who loves her infant but 'Well, I certainly did

Lord Lovel stepped back into the shadow of the shrubs.

Scarcely had he done so before the lights of a brougham flashed through the grand front entrance.

From where he waited, watching, the young man could dimly distinguish the outlines of two figures-his father, and a woman in a long tur paletet, who looked extremely tall but whose face was hidden by the obscurity and by the thick black veil she wore.

Having alighted from the carriage, both disappeared indoors, and the broughman was driven round to the stables.

Then, atter waiting for another few minutes, Lord Lovel emerged from his hiding place, crossed the lawn, and ascending the terrace-steps, entered the house by the drawing-room window.

As he did so, he heard his father's voice in the hall, saying to the butler-

'My son has arrived, you tell me, but where is he? In his room? No-you needn't trouble, I'll go and find him myself. This is a surprise.

On the hearthrug, in the firelight, stood the tall woman.

At the sound of the footstep behind her she turned, and Lord Lovel saw her

'Magdalen !'

'Claude !'

For a moment they remained staring blankly at each other, in bewilderment that was tinged with fear.

Then, before there was any time for explanations, Lord Briancourt entered the room.

## CHAPTER III.

#### TWIXT LOVE AND SCORN.

'Ah, there you are, my dear, dear boy,' cried the earl, hurrying forward into the firelight, and taking both his son's hands in his, 'and you and my wife have already made friends, I see. How happy I am to have you home once more. I shan't let you go again in a hurry, I can tell you, so be prepared to settle down. Imitate my example, and marry !

'Magdalen and I know ot a charming wife for you, don't we, Magdalen?' he added, turning to the tall, silent woman, who, leaning one elbow on the mantelpiece, was shading her face with a trembling hand. 'We were talking about you together this very morning at breakfast, and planning whom you should marry, for Magdalen is just like the rest of her sex, I mer who could be saved by the find-a born match-maker. To think that you should have returned today, of all days ! Icouldn't have wished for anything better. But I suppose you planned it on purpose to give me a pleasant surprise? That

'And what do you think of my Magdalen Cuthbert ?' said the earl, as he returned to his seat by the fire. 'You cannot say that she is not beautiful.'

'I have no doubt she is, my dear father,' replied the younger man in a voice that, notwithstanding his utmost efforts, sounded strangely cold; but you must not ask me for my opinion just yet. You forget that I have hardly seen her.'

'That is true,' laughed the earl; 'what an ass I am, to be sure ! But she is beautiful-beautiful as a dream. I can hardly yet realize my good luck in having won her; and now my one wish is that you and she, the two I love best on earth, may be the best of friends. Were it otherwise, my happiness would never be complete. I see no reason why we should not get, on well together, my dear father,' replied Lord Lovel, but even as the words passed his lips, he telt them to be untrue, for how could he ever even hope to 'get on well with' a woman who, after promising to be his wife, had, in less than a twelvemonth, married a man old enough to be her father. and whom it was probable she had accepted because he happened to be an earl, with wealth enough to satisfy her every caprice ?"

'I'm very glad now,' mused the young man, bitterly, as he lay back in his chair and gazed in the fire, moodily gnawing the ends of his long moustache, 'I'm very glad I wooed her as a wandering artist, who had his living to earn with pencil and brush; had sde guersed I was an earl's son, she would never have jilted me, and I should have made her my wife, never suspecting that it was my title and fortune that had tempted her !'

And he tried to persuade himself that he was devoutly thankful for the escape he had; but, somehow, could only succeed in feeling miserable.

For half-an-hour, father and son sat talkgin of all that happened since they had parted, two years before.

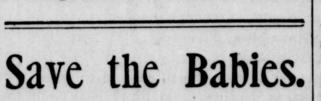
'What was Lady Briancourt's maiden name ?' asked the young man, rather abruptly.

'Magdalen Lisle. She is a niece of the novelist Meredith Fane, a charming fellow, whom you will meet to-night. Her father, an impecunious Irish squire, had a small estate in the south of Ireland, and there it was Magdalen was born, and lived till the day of his death.'

'Ab ! he is dead ?' (CONTINUED ON FIFTEENTH PAGE.)



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by surprise,' answered the young man, who had recovered his composure, if not his colour. 'But I found, on arriving, that a surprise, greater far than any that I could have planned, awaited me here.'

'A surprise for you P I don't understand,' said the earl. 'You surely received my last letter, written to you six weeks ago, and the wedding cards, despatched a fortnight later to the address you gave me

'No: but that was no fault of yours or of the post. In April, I caught typhoid fever and lay ill in Naples for several weeks. Some kind-hearted English people nursed me through it. They couldn't communicate with you, as they were anxious to do because they didn't Brisncourt almost as etten. At length | bottle and it cured the baby almost at | know your name or address. I was travelling incog. at the time, under the



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