

Linked by Fate

BY CHARLES GARVICE

Author of "The Verdict of the Heart," "A Heritage of Hate," "Nell of Shorne Mills," "Paid For," "A Modern Juliet," Etc.

(Continued.)

"As I told you, I shall never marry. You are the heir, the next earl. See here, Julian; let us understand each other. I want you to make the Court your home—that is, if you care to do so, and while you wish to do so. You don't imagine that I intend living here alone? No, thanks! I know what loneliness, solitude, mean—"

"He broke off suddenly. 'I want you to understand that the Court will be yours, and that you have as much right to live here as, well, as I have. Make the room your laboratory, by all means.'"

"But—"

"No buts," interrupted Vane. "I mean it. I've got a trick of saying what I mean. I—well, I'm not the sort of man to settle down anywhere. I'm a restless, wandering Jew kind of fellow, and I shall probably be off on the tramp again presently. Now, you—well, I fancy you are quite a different sort of man; you are a 'Home Bird,' as the song says. Fond of music and science and all that sort of thing. Good! This is evidently the place for you."

"But—"

"Vane made a slight gesture. 'Oh, don't think that I want to interfere with your independence, or to be a bore and a drag on you. Not a bit of it. You can keep up that old place of yours by the Thames, if you like. I should; it's a queer, quaint old diggings; but make the Court your home. Now, don't argue. I'm a poor hand at arguing, and invariably lose my temper. You can send for that old servant of yours—what's her name, by the way?—"

"Deborah," said Julian. His brows were knit, and he stood with drooping lids and tightened lips; he seemed to be reflecting so intensely as scarcely to be breathing.

"Deborah; name seems to fit her. Well, send for her, if you like. In fact—there! do just as you like, and we shall get on very well together. Let's get out of this, shall we? If you decide to turn the room into a laboratory, it will want thoroughly doing up—"

"Oh, no," said Julian, glancing round almost lovingly. "Just clearing out and cleaning. The fireplace would need some little alteration. An intelligent mason—"

Vane laughed.

"First, find your mason," he said, "then sound him for intelligence; result—" he shrugged his shoulders. "We can get through that door into the stable courtyard. Why, where is the door leading from this room?" he broke off to remark.

Julian looked round. "There does not appear to be a door. Perhaps it has been bricked up or panelled over."

"Ah, p'raps so," said Vane, indifferently, and he led the way out by the door at which they had entered.

"My department again," he said with a laugh as they entered the stables. "But perhaps you ride as well as you fence, Julian?"

Julian shook his head. "I'm not much of a horseman," he said.

"Modesty again!" retorted Vane. "Well, you must pick your mount. There used to be a fairish lot of animals—Ah, Dodson," as the coachman came hurrying across the yard from his cottage to receive his new master, "how are you? We are just looking round, but in a hurried kind of way only. Got anything worth looking at?"

Mr. Dodson hastened to display his animals.

"Hem, the carriage horses are all right; and that's a decent mare, Dodson; so's the chestnut; and the cob in the end stall looks a nice little lad. The hunters—well, well—hem!"

"Just so, my lord," said Mr. Dodson, with respectful eagerness. "There's nothing here fit to carry your lordship. The late earl gave up hunting long ago, as your lordship knows—"

"Well, keep your eyes open, and I'll do the same, and we may pick up two or three likely ones. Meanwhile—chestnut, quiet?"

"Quite, my lord. I bred him myself, and broke him."

"Good; then he'll do for Mr. Julian here—my cousin, Mr. Julian Shore, Dodson."

Mr. Dodson touched his cap to Julian, who remonstrated with Vane. "Oh, but my dear Vane! You will surely keep the chestnut for yourself—"

"Oh, the mare will do for me!" said Vane, carelessly. "She's a good sort, though not so handsome, as the chestnut—"

"Nor so quiet, my lord; a little bit of temper," put in Dodson.

"So I see," said Vane. "I noticed her eyes and ears when I went up to her just now. But I like a bit of temper. Anyhow, I'll give her a trial. We'll just glance at the coach-house—"

"Ah, we want a new carriage or two, my lord," said Mr. Dodson.

"Just so, just so. Ah, well, plenty of time," said Vane as he cast a comprehensive eye round. Glad to see you looking so well, Dodson."

"Thank you, my lord, and the same to your lordship, if I may make so bold," said the gratified Dodson, with a touch of his cap.

"We'll go under the arch and round to the front," said Vane, as they walked away. "Nice fellow—Dodson; remember him putting me on my first pony. Hello, who's this—Fanworthy, by George!"

They had passed under the tall archway and entered upon the drive along which an open landau was coming toward the house. An elderly man with the air of a sportsman and

an aristocrat was the sole occupant, and as he caught sight of the two young men he leaned forward and waved his hand.

"Ah, Vane!" he exclaimed. "What luck to just catch you! I heard the news of your arrival, and drove over on the chance of seeing you."

"The luck's mine, Lord Fanworthy," said Vane. "It's very kind of you, very! Let me introduce my cousin—Mr. Julian Shore."

Lord Fanworthy raised his hat with old-world courtesy.

"Come into the house," said Vane; but Lord Fanworthy shook his head.

"No, no. Can't! Against positive orders. Her ladyship emphatically bade me not leave the carriage. If he is there, just tell him that he is to come back with you; that I say so." Her very words, Vane, I assure you."

"In that case, there's only one thing to do: obey," said Vane.

"That's right, my boy!" said Lord Fanworthy, approvingly. "I lay get in, Mr. Shore; my wife will be delighted to see you. It's not far. What a beautiful day for your return, Vane! By Jove, you must have a rare budget to tell us! Not a word till you get home! You're looking—yes, well. Been knocked about a bit, eh? Thought so." Then he turned to Julian. "I remember your father, of course, Mr. Shore. He may have spoken of me?"

Julian colored slightly. "I am sorry to say that he did not, Lord Fanworthy. My father never spoke of—old times."

"Ah, yes, yes, quite so!" assented Lord Fanworthy, quickly. "Great nuisance, family feuds! You have a look of the Mannerings, Mr. Shore. I think I should have known you as one of them, even if I had met you elsewhere."

The three men chatted as the horses span along the well-kept road, and after a short drive they reached the Grange. Lord Fanworthy led them into the drawing-room, calling "Emily!" as he went. Lady Fanworthy was seated in a low chair by the window, knitting. She had been a reigning beauty; she was beautiful still with her silvery hair, wonderful complexion and the grey eyes which were almost as brilliant—and far keener—than those of most girls. She held out her snow-white and exquisitely shaped hand to Vane and nodded and smiled, her eyes flashing over him as if they were taking in every feature of his face; then they passed from him to Julian, enquiringly, and as keenly.

"It's good to see you, Vane," she said; and there was almost a maternal note in the low, clear voice; for Vane, as a lad, had been a favorite of hers, and with the tact for which she was famous, she had often slipped in between his uncle and him and prevented a quarrel. "And it was good of you to come so quickly. And this is—"

Vane introduced Julian, and she bowed and smiled graciously. "And so you have come into your own, Vane? And it feels strange—at first?"

"It does, Lady Fanworthy," said Vane, as he took the seat beside her to which she had motioned him.

"And you are going to settle down, to be a model landlord and a pattern peer?"

"No," said Vane. "Part's already filled," and he looked towards Lord Fanworthy, who had gone to the next room to show Julian the view.

"Godfrey will be glad to have you at the Court," said her ladyship. "He was always fond of you. And I—"

"So that is Julian Shore." Her voice scarcely dropped, but it was so soft as to be inaudible to the others. "A handsome young man; darker than the Mannerings usually are."

"Yes; he's quite an Adonis," said Vane. "And an extremely good fellow. I hope you'll like him. We are great friends already, though we only met a day or two ago."

"I will see," she said, with a swift, searching glance at Julian. "But I want to talk about you. Where have you been? No! are you well, happy, Vane?"

His eyes fell before her brilliant ones which seemed to reach his sadly tried heart.

"Fit as a fiddle, my dear lady; almost as fit as Lord Fanworthy there. And I am so glad to see you looking so well. Not a day older."

She raised her level eyebrows. "Why should I be? My dear Vane, at my age, women grow younger, nowadays. Where have you been not to know that! And you are well and—happy?"

Vane's eyes dropped, then he raised them, but with an effort, for this old lady was a difficult one to deceive.

"As happy as I deserve," he said, smilingly.

"And you have been travelling a great deal, and, if rumor speaks the truth, have had some adventures."

Vane nodded, his lips tightening. "Yes," he said, "all sorts of adventures. You still stick to your knitting, I see, Lady Fanworthy."

It was enough for her; and she asked no more questions.

"Here's the tea," she said, as the butler brought it in. "But, of course, you'll stay to dinner, Godfrey shall send for your things—"

But Vane declined. "I've ordered dinner at the Court," he said, "and Prance would break his heart if he didn't turn on this the first night."

She nodded approvingly. "Quite right, Vane."

"But, sec," he said; "it will be rather lonely for us two bachelors. Now, if you want to be as kind as

you always used to be, you bring Lord Fanworthy to dine with us!"

"Yes," she said, smoothly.

The other two men came to the tea-table and her ladyship conversed with Julian. She asked no questions, but almost unconsciously he found himself telling her that he was unmarried, that he lived alone, that he had no profession and was content with a small income; indeed, nearly all the details which another person would only have extracted by a series of categorical questions; and he did not make the discovery until the two young men were going home in the landau.

"A wonderful woman!" Vane remarked. "You admired her, of course? She used to be a great beauty; and she is as clever as she is beautiful."

"Yes; she's clever," said Julian, absently, as he reflected on the way in which her ladyship had "pumped" him.

"Yes; she used to play an important part in the political world," Vane went on. "Kept what used to be called a 'salon'; entertained the people of her husband's party; Fanworthy was in the Cabinet. They say that she kept the party in power for six months longer than it ought to have been. Don't understand politics myself. She was very good to me when I was a lad—they both were—and I like her, naturally. I don't know any one to whom I'd sooner go, if I were in trouble or in a mess. I think you'll like her, Julian."

"I am sure I shall," said Julian, with an admirably feigned tone of conviction.

"Oh, Prance," said Vane, as the butler came to meet them, "Lord and Lady Fanworthy dine here to-night. And light up the music-room, will you. Right?"

It was more than a pleasant dinner, for Lady Fanworthy made it a charming one. In spite of himself Julian was drawn within the circle of the spell of her brilliant eyes, and the clear, low voice in which she said the wittiest things with the air of an innocent girl.

"We won't let you go all alone to that Madame Tussaud of a drawing-room, Lady Fanworthy," Vane said when the dessert was over. "We'll go into the music-room. Julian here is a tip-top performer. Send the coffee in there, please, will you, Prance? You won't mind our cigarettes, I know, Lady Fanworthy."

"Not if you give me one for myself," she said.

Vane led her, with a certain courtesy which he did not usually display, to the easiest of the chairs, and, when the cigarettes were smoked, took Julian by the arm and gently pushed him towards the piano.

"Sing us that thing you sang to me at your rooms, will you?" he said; and he went and seated himself in a low chair beside Lady Fanworthy's, and with his arms folded behind his head listened with half-closed eyes; he was back on the island again, he sure.

Julian sang three songs in response to Lord Fanworthy's eager murmur of admiration and delight and Vane's almost proprietorial "Go on, Julian!"

The light from the shaded candles fell full on the performer's dark face, and Lady Fanworthy watched it steadily.

"Julian's a regular nightingale, isn't he?" said Vane in a low voice. "Isn't it a fine voice?"

The old lady withdrew her eyes slowly.

"Yes," she said. "He is very good looking, and has a fine voice, and quite pretty manners. Did you ever see the black panther at the Zoo, Vane?"

Vane stared at her, then laughed. "The black panther when it is asleep, or has just been fed and is purring and licking itself."

Vane colored with momentary annoyance; then he laughed again.

"This is the first time I have ever known you to be unjust and hard," he said in a low voice.

The brilliant eyes regarded him steadily, gravely.

"How do you know that I am—unjust and hard now?" she asked, with a slight imitation of his voice.

Vane moved with a gesture of impatience and deprecation.

"He's too good a fellow, is Julian, to be compared to a tiger," he said.

"Panther, I said," retorted Lady Fanworthy, sweetly. "And a black one. Thank you so very much, Mr. Shore. You have a charming voice charming. Godfrey, we must not rob these young people of their beauty sleep; it is late."

Lord Fanworthy was glowing all over with satisfaction as they drove home.

"Splendid thing for the county, Vane's succession. I'll get him to take the hounds! And I say, Emily, what a delightful young fellow this Julian Shore is, eh?"

"Delightful," responded Lady Fanworthy; but as she spoke she looked at her radiant husband with the tender pity with which the clever wife tolerates the spouse whom she loves notwithstanding his duller intelligence.

"There go the happiest pair I ever met," remarked Vane, as the two men sat in their smoking jackets in the billiard room.

"They seem devoted to each other," said Julian. "I suppose the man who said that marriages were made in Heaven must have had such a couple in his mind."

"Marriages are made in Heaven, but they smuggle a very fair counterfeit from quite another place," observed Vane, absently. "How is it you never married, Julian?" As the question left his lips he would have liked to have checked it, for the subject was a sore one for him; but the question was asked, and he waited for the answer.

Julian knooked the ash from the cigarette and looked before him under his drooping lids.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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9.50 a. m.—For St. John and East.

5.50 p. m.—For St. Stephen, Houlton, Woodstock, Boston, etc. Montreal and West. Palace Sleeper Fredericton Jct. to Montreal. Pullman Sleeper Fredericton Jct. to Boston.

9.00 p. m.—For St. John and East.

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No. 321 Suburban for Marysville. 11.15

No. 323 Suburban for Marysville. 13.00

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No. 327 Suburban for Marysville. 18.25

No. 329 Suburban for Marysville. 21.00

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No. 318 Suburban from Marysville. 8.15

No. 320 Suburban from Marysville. 11.00

No. 322 Suburban from Marysville. 14.25

No. 324 Suburban from Marysville. 17.05

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