

# Beaton's Bargain.

BY MRS. ALEXANDER.

SYNOPSIS.

Mrs. Winington, Lady Mary Hay, Leslie Beaton and Jack Maxwell are members of London's smart society set. Beaton is Mrs. Winington's brother, and being poor resolves to answer an advertisement that promises to get him a rich wife. Lady Mary is a widow whom Beaton admires. Mrs. Winington and Maxwell were lovers before the former married. Beaton, with company with Maitland is introduced to the heiress—Edith Vivian—by the latter's guardian. In the meantime Maitland has fallen in love with Edith, which angers Mrs. Winington, who determines that Edith shall not marry him and lies to her about him. Edith has begun to like Maitland and is mortified to hear Mrs. Winington's false description of him.

CHAPTER VII. (Continued.)

And Edith, a good deal to her surprise, found herself launched into an easy conversation on art and scenery and sketching with the man she shrank from meeting two short hours before.

"Why, Edith," cried Mrs. Winington, coming in quickly, "I had no idea you were here." She spoke in a tone of surprise. "I was obliged to see the head-gardener from Winford about those new orchids, and I had to read him Captain Sewell's letter about them."

A little pleasant general chat ensued, then Beaton said he had promised to call on one or two people, and rose to leave.

"Come back to dinner," said his sister, "and be sure you do nothing rash—nothing at all, indeed, until you consult me." Beaton laughed, bowed to Edith, and withdrew.

"He is looking wretchedly ill, isn't he?" said Mrs. Winington, turning to Edith. "Poor fellow, I am so glad you have got your meeting over in this accidental way. It would be quite foolish not to be good friends; indeed there is no reason whatever why you should not."

Beaton's return appeared to break the spell of undefined discomfort that had oppressed both Edith and her hostess. He made himself a pleasant, unobtrusive companion. His conversation and manner were more serious, more kindly and less complimentary than before. He talked of his future life in remote regions, and expressed a manly regret for his wasted youth, his lost opportunities.

Edith began to feel like an indulgent sister to a prodigal but penitent brother. Mrs. Winington took long drives to the more picturesque environs of London, and encouraged Edith to try her "prentice hand" at sketching from nature. Colonel Winington oscillated between his hunting lodge, where he kept a stud of horses, and town, and July was drawing to a close.

Mr. Joseph Dargan was busy as usual over his papers and accounts one sultry morning. His dingy den was dingier and more redolent of dust than ever, the blind he had torn in his effort to save Beaton's eyes from the sun had been carelessly nailed up in a slant, and Dargan himself, who was too dry and bloodless to feel changes of weather, was brown, discolored and grubby as usual.

He wore a look of satisfaction, however; a fresh victim had just effected a loan through his "agency," as he termed it, and he had been calculating his immediate and prospective gains. In this agreeable occupation he was roused by the entrance of the tiny boy, who placed



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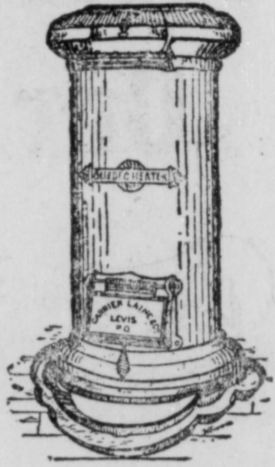
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cut off her support, leave her no "stand by" but Mr. Beaton. She is perfectly desolate; this ought to make her thank her good genius that she has found such a protector as my brother."

"My sister will no doubt do as I bid her," said Dargan, laying down his pen, and beginning to stroke down his leathery, puckered cheeks with his finger and thumb. "But it seems a little strange to me that you should be so desperate anxious to get my ward for your brother. Grand people like you might have a choice of heiresses, I should think."

"Heiresses fenced round with bristling hedges of uncles well up in the private history of every man in society, and cousins anxious to keep the money in the family, if you like, but not heiresses perfectly free and unencumbered. Do not waste my time and your own in conjecture. Will you follow my suggestion, or shall we break off negotiations, and send your ward back to the wilds from which you dragged her, poor child, for your own ends?"

"I don't pretend to be an angel, Mrs. Winington no more than Mr. Beaton does, but I thought and still think, I was doing the best I could for Miss Vivian by pushing her marriage. I'm of your opinion that this shilly-shallying ought to be put a stop to; but you are as quick as a flash of lightning, and down on a man before he knows where he is. I think your notion is very good, very good, and you'll see I'll not be long about acting on it. I'll start Mrs. Miles off and give her permanent employment; but I hope, when the knot is tied hard and fast, Mr. Beaton would not object to a little annuity in consideration of the help she is giving him."

"She is helping you, too, Mr. Dargan," said Mrs. Winington, shrewdly, "and I hope you will not prove ungrateful." She rose as she spoke. "We understand each other then," she continued; "our interests are alike. I suppose I may depend on you?"

"I'll be as true as the needle to the pole," cried Dargan, enthusiastically.

Mrs. Winington laughed as she gathered up her delicate skirt lest it should touch the dirty carpet, and with a slight, haughty bend of the head left him.

"Well, she is a clipper. I never saw her match; and isn't she regular fire and tow! I wonder now what's the real reason she's so keen for this wedding? there's something more than anxiety about her brother under it all. I'll say nothing to Tilly about this; time enough, time enough. As to Sally, she daresn't refuse me anything and Tilly has no call to interfere with her; duty and family affection must be attended to. Where shall I send her? Liverpool; ay, Liverpool, would do well, very well."

Meantime Mrs. Winington, who had driven to C Street in a cab, and kept it waiting, was proceeding homeward via the Strand, when by one of those currents in the stream of life

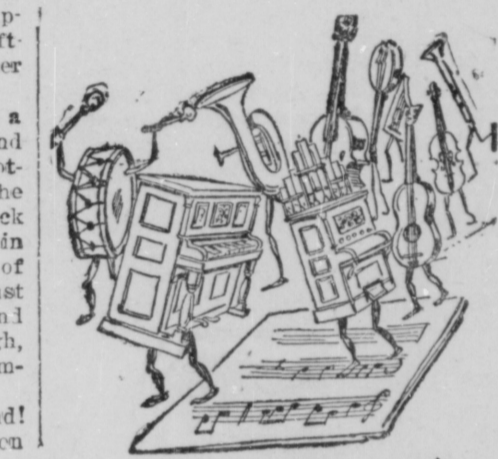
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which are no doubt governed by laws as yet undiscovered, despite their apparently accidental nature, she was drifted against the man who occupied her thoughts.

At little past Temple Bar there was a block, and her cab was obliged to stand still for a minute or two beside the footway. As she looked listlessly at the passers-by, she suddenly recognized Jack Maitland coming from the direction in which he was going. With a mixture of surprise, vexation, pleasure, but the last strongest, she waved her hand and caught his eye. He came readily enough, and the next instant she was exclaiming, with smiling lips and eyes:

"Back again in London, Mr. Maitland! Then I hope your dear mother is going on favorably."

CHAPTER VIII.  
ACCEPTED.

It was always with a sensation of pleasurable excitement that Mrs. Winington met Maitland, but on the present occasion it was by no means unalloyed. His coming was most inopportune, his appearance might introduce a discordant element into the scheme she was so diligently harmonizing. But even while she smiled on him the kindest of welcomes, she said in her heart: "He shall not defeat me, nor even delay me."

"Shall you be long in town," she asked, after Maitland had replied to her inquiries.

(To be Continued)



There are weeds in everybody's garden, and no garden was ever planted in which weeds did not insolently present themselves. They come without invitation and without welcome. If you recognize them as weeds, and if you have sense enough to know that weeds choke flowers, and pull the weeds up, root and branch, you will save the flowers.

There are weeds in the health-garden of many a man and woman. The doctors call them disease germs. If you have sense enough to distinguish them from the flowers of health, and root them out, you will be robust, healthy and happy. The most dangerous of all the weeds in the flower garden of health is that deadly creeper consumption.

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