

# 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.)

"My day or two. I have no railway business to detain me now."

"We are, unfortunately, going out to dinner to-day, but can you look in and have a cup of tea a little before five?"

"Certainly. I shall be most happy," returned Maitland, his eyes lighting up with the joyous, tender expression she knew so well.

"Do not be late. She kissed her hand to him as he stepped back, and signed to the driver that he might go on.

"He is not handsome," thought Mrs. Winington, "but how much better looking than most handsome men. Oh, no one ever loved me as Jack did, and I treated him abominably. I think he likes me a little still." Then the horrible suspicion flashed across her brain, could the light that came to his eyes have been evoked by the prospect of meeting Edith Vivian? No, impossible! how could that insignificant child attract him from her rich beauty and practiced charm—a charm, too, which had once completely captivated him?

The perfume of those delightful, foolish days must hang round her still. Oh, to hear him say in the deep, full tones that used to stir her blood, if not her heart, "No one can ever be to me what you were!" No, it was not likely that a poor little simper could be her rival. Lady Mary was dreaming; yet, "He shall not see her," was her fixed determination as she alighted within a short distance of her own door, and dismissed the conveyance.

"Has Mr. Beaton been here this morning?" asked Mrs. Winington, as she entered her own mansion.

"No, 'm," said the butler.

"Then send to the club, and say I want to speak to him at once; send one of the grooms on horseback. If Mr. Beaton is not at his club, let the man go to his lodgings."

"Very well, 'm."

Mrs. Winington went to her room. At luncheon the master of the house made his appearance, which was not an event of every-day occurrence, and when Mrs. Winington and her brother came in, they found him chatting cheerfully with Edith in the bay-window looking on the gardens.

"By George!" cried Colonel Winington, "Miss Vivian has been making great progress, Jean. I have persuaded her to let me see some of her work. Look here," holding out a drawing of a lattice window, one half open, with ivy and dematins clustering round the side, a vase standing on the window-sill as if in readiness for the flowers that were to fill it. "It's deucedly natural. There's a window in the head-keeper's lodge at Winford just like this. You must come down and see it."

"I am very sorry," cried Edith, impulsively; "it is so difficult to find anything to sketch near London."

"Why lose this brief idea?" said Beaton, looking up. "Can you trust me, Miss Vivian and the ponies to me? I will drive carefully, and cut pencils extra with diligence. What do you say?"

"An excellent suggestion," exclaimed Mrs. Winington. "Will you accept it, Edith?"

"Yes; thank you very much. I should be so glad to do a little more sketching."

"You are right, Edith. Then I will order the phaeton to come round at three, and you'll have a nice long afternoon. Ring the bell, Leslie."

"Ha, Beaton, you haven't served your apprenticeship in drawing-room life for nothing," said Colonel Winington significantly.

His wife looked at him with a warning frown, but his insinuation fell harmlessly on Edith's ear; she was feeding Mrs. Winington's favorite Skye with bits of sweet biscuit.

Colonel Winington rose soon after and left the room, saying he had promised to meet a fellow at Tattersall's.

Mrs. Winington soon followed his example and Edith went to put her drawing materials together.

Maitland thought time had never gone so lingeringly as between his meeting with Mrs. Winington and five o'clock, when he was due at Fairfield Terrace. He felt quite sure of meeting Miss Vivian. He knew from a letter of the colonel's, received only a couple of days before, that she was still Mrs. Winington's guest, and likely to remain. Moreover, she never went out without her hostess.

Would she welcome him with the sweet, frank, unconscious gladness he had often read in her eyes, when they had met unexpectedly, or would she have changed during his absence? If not, no weak scruples should hold him back from trying to win her. If she had absolutely refused Beaton, as Colonel Winington seemed certain she had, Mrs. Winington had no right to be opposed to him, and yet he felt with instinctive conviction that she would oppose him bitterly.

"It's uncommon pretty," continued Winington. "But come, let us sit down. I am as hungry as if I had breakfasted last month. Beaton, cut that chicken pie. What's the matter with you? I never knew you so silent since I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance. Have you been snubbing him, Miss Vivian?"

Edith blushed quickly and vividly. Mrs. Winington frowned, and could hardly refrain from uttering the "How asinine!" which sprang to her lips.

"They say Parliament is to be dissolved on the fifth of August," she said to her husband, intending to draw him effectually from the subject.

"They say! Who says? Some blundering idiot. There's no such luck. But I am not going to stay on roasting here. We'll go down to Winford; sh'n't we, Miss Vivian? and you shall make pictures by the yard. Try a little hock; do it's iced, and very good."

"No, thank you," then addressing Mrs. Winington, "I have written to Mrs. Miles and to Mr. Tilly, telling them that the studio would be closed next week, and that you cannot stay much longer in London, therefore, I had better return to Littlemore." She spoke with some hesitation, and looked appealingly to Mrs. Winington.

"Well, dear, I wish you had spoken to me before you wrote. I shall not leave town till the first of August, and though I cannot exactly fix my plans, there is time enough; you need not be in such a hurry to run away from us."

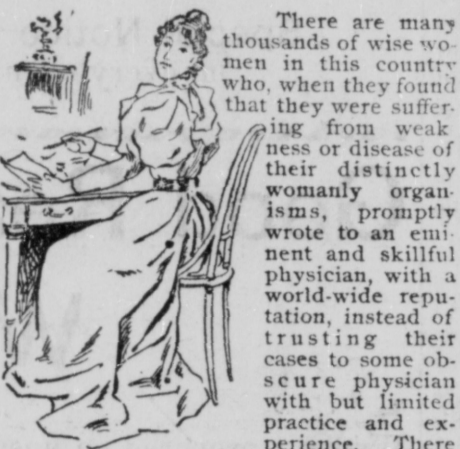
"No, let us all go down to Winford together. You don't want to go off on any distant cruise, do you, Jean?" cried Colonel Winington.

"I shall not commit myself," she returned, laughing.

Beaton preserved an expressive silence, his eyes fixed on his plate.

"I do not wish to go, indeed I do not," said Edith, earnestly. "You are all so good to me, but I fear to be in your way, and I do not want to desert my own home."

"And we are of course tired of so tiresome and naughty a little girl," said Mrs. Winington, with a pleasant smile. "However, things will arrange themselves. I was going to propose, as it is such a splendid day, to drive over to Clapham Common in the pony carriage. There are some rather picturesque groups of trees there—one especially on an island in the large mere or pool. It might be good practice to try and sketch them; trees are so difficult. I went there once with your sister, Frank, when she was art crazy."



There are many thousands of wise women in this country who, when they found that they were suffering from weakness or disease of their distinctly womanly organs, promptly wrote to an eminent and skillful physician, with a world-wide reputation, instead of trusting their cases to some obscure physician with but limited practice and experience. There are many reasons why a wise woman follows this course. The chances are that an obscure physician of small practice will not diagnose troubles of this nature properly. If he does, he will insist on the obnoxious examinations and local treatment from which every sensitive, modest woman shrinks.

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"I must steer with caution," he thought as he rang and was admitted into the cool, dusky, perfumed hall.

"This way, sir," said the butler, ushering him up-stairs to the smaller of the two drawing-rooms, where Mrs. Winington sat in softened light amid a profusion of delicious flowers, fresh from a second toilet, after showing herself in her carriage, shopping, and leaving cards. She had hurried home and dressed just in time to be languidly at ease when Maitland was announced.

"Bring the tea; and Miller, I am not at home." The butler bowed obedience and retired.

"I am quite glad to hear all about your mother and dear Craigrothie from yourself," said Mrs. Winington, when they had exchanged greetings. "Mrs. Maitland was always so good to me when I was a motherless bairn at home. I hope she is gathering strength."

"Very slowly. Yet she does improve. I doubt, however, that she will be able to bear an autumn and winter at West-ton though it is the most sheltered spot on the estate. I shall take her away south somewhere."

"You were always very fond of your mother, Jack," said Mrs. Winington, naturally. "But oh, there is no use in looking back. Can any afterglow the world gives equal the fresh delights of early days? I am half ashamed of the aching at my heart when I think of them."

"I don't fancy, considering your present surroundings, you have very much cause to regret them," said Maitland, smiling.

"You think so?" looking down. "I have most to regret my own folly and weakness," sighing slightly. "But let me be more about your mother," she resumed, as the servant placed tea and saucer-like break and butter on the table noiselessly and then vanished. "It is cars since we met. I suppose her tranquil life has left few traces on her sweet face. She always seemed a kind parent to me."

"She is a good deal changed, for such her existence has been still such. Heaven knows, she has had a great deal of anxiety, and little rest."

(To be Continued)

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