

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.

CHAPTER V. (Continued.)

"There was not any violent curiosity in the tone."

"No," continued Mrs. Winington, thoughtfully; "I was vexed with him. I thought him too manly for that sort of self-conceit. Perhaps I ought not to tell you, but it may be useful as a warning not to trust appearances." She paused, and Edith looked at her in great surprise. "We were talking of his leaving town," she resumed, "and he said, with his grave smile, 'On one account I shall not be sorry to leave; your little friend is so unsophisticated that she shows her flattering preference for me in the most unmistakable manner. It would really be touching were it not so funny, and I am not disposed to fall in love in return.'"

"There was a moment's silence. The color rose slowly in Edith's cheeks, as if shame and mortification were gradually penetrating her soul. Though she did not dream of doubting Mrs. Winington, she half unconsciously exclaimed: 'He could not have said that.'"

"Oh, if you imagine I invented the amiable speech—"

"No, no; I do not, but it seems impossible. I found him so kind and—and sensible. I did like him, and like to talk to him, but I am not in love with him. I know I am not. You do not believe I should let myself love a man who does not care about me—do you, Mrs. Winington?"

"I should be sorry to believe you so—so unmaidenly," said Mrs. Winington, with emphasis.

"Indeed—indeed I am not. I am more grieved and disappointed than I can say, to think Mr. Maitland could speak to me in such a way. It is unworthy of him."

"So I think, and so I told him," said Mrs. Winington.

"Are you quite sure he meant me?" persisted Edith.

"My dear, do you fancy I would be so idiotic as to make a mistake in such a matter? Believe me, the conceit and vanity of men are unfathomable. I did expect better things from Jack Maitland, but it seems he is no better than the rest. I must say, though, my brother gives himself no superior airs, and pretends to be nothing more than a pleasant, easy-going gentleman. He would never talk of a woman in that strain. Though it is rather a breach of confidence, I am almost tempted to show you the two letters he has written me since you banished him."

"Perhaps Mr. Beaton might not like me to see them," said Edith, shrinking back, all quivering, from the blow just dealt her.

"He need never know. Do read them, Edith. I should like you to see the sort of nature you have rejected."

With considerable assistance from Mrs. Winington, for Beaton's writing was exceedingly wild, Edith read the effusions, which were admirably composed, easy, natural, full of veiled sadness.

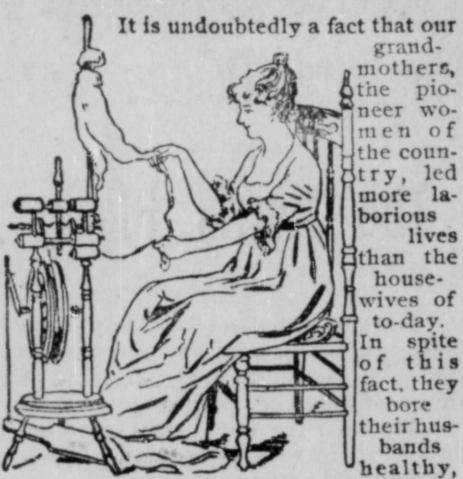
But that was all over now, she must forget her own folly and credulity and try to be worthy of the friendship so generously bestowed on her. Indeed she was almost disposed to think she ought to marry Beaton out of gratitude to his queenly sister.

While Edith strove to gain composure, and efface the signs of her unusual emotion, Mrs. Winington penned a hasty but encouraging letter to Leslie.

"I am really proud of myself," she wrote. "I have made most dexterous use of a hint from Lady Mary, and dealt poor Edith's self-love a fatal blow, from which it must be your business to restore her. She is already disposed to regard you with a sort of grateful kindness which may lead to better things. I suspect that Maitland has been—knowingly or not, who can tell—a bit of a traitor. You must, if possible, be married before he comes to the front again. Be ready to start on a receipt of a telegram from me. You will find directions at your old quarters. Your letters do you credit; continue them, and never forget all you owe to your very much worried sister, Jean. P. S.—Let me have the guardian's address by return—I mean Dargan's. I may want to see him."

The second post brought another epistle to the exile, who was growing intolerably weary of his enforced solitude.

"I don't like you to hear from any one but myself that I accepted 'Go-bang' last night. Let us call him 'Stanley Brown' in future. I find that the S. on his cards means Stanley. His father, it seems, named him after his landlord. Curious that with his proclivities he should not have used it before in extent. Of course the crucial test of settlements is to come. Heaven grant the alliance may not prove a penal settlement. I think, however, all will go



It is undoubtedly a fact that our grand-mothers, the pioneer women of the country, led more laborious lives than the house-wives of to-day. In spite of this fact, they bore their husbands healthy, robust sons and daughters, and did not become weak, complaining invalids as a consequence. There are probably several reasons for this. One is, that they lived more in the open air, and another, and probably the most influential of all, is that they were less prudish than the women of to-day. They were not ashamed to know something of their own physical make-up. They were not too nice to take care of their health in a womanly way. Women now-a-days suffer untold tortures in silence, because of weakness and disease of the distinctly feminine organism, rather than consult a physician, or even talk upon the subject to their own husbands. They imagine that troubles of this description can only be cured by undergoing the disgusting examinations and local treatment insisted upon by the average modern physician. Doctor Pierce's Favorite Prescription cures all diseases peculiar to women in the privacy of their own homes. It does away with the necessity for examinations and local treatment. It acts directly on the important organs concerned, making them strong, healthy and vigorous. It fits for wifehood and the burdens of household duties. It allays inflammation, heals ulceration and soothes pain. It tones and builds up the nerves. It banishes the discomforts of the time of expectancy and makes baby's advent easy and almost painless. Thousands have testified to its merits.

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right, and I must say it will be an immense relief to have a house of my own. You would find it the same. Pray make haste and marry your little field-flower; then we may choose abodes within easy range of each other. I intend to be great friends with Mrs. Leslie Beaton, and I suspect we shall need the support of each other's sympathy. Could you not steal a march on your imperious sister, and come up incog. for twenty-four hours? I feel as if a long talk with you would do me good, for somehow I have been so disgracefully weak as to cry over the general 'cussedness' of things. Yours, as ever,

"MARY H."

CHAPTER VII.

MRS. WININGTON SCORES.

Mrs. Maitland was in a very critical condition when her son reached Craigrothie. The doctor in attendance had wrestled with the disease successfully, but feared the weakness which ensued might do death's bidding as effectually as his more active emissary.

It was not until she had been carefully prepared that the sufferer was allowed to see her son. He was profoundly moved at the sight of the pale, delicate face with its silvery hair lying so helplessly on the pillow. His mother could only smile faintly as he bent over her and took her thin, nearly transparent hand in his, with infinite tenderness. Neither spoke.

Maitland could not for a few moments trust his voice. He knew the loneliness of her life. She was a creature of finer and more sensitive organization than those among whom she had been forced to pass the larger part of her existence. Needing warmth and sunshine, she had been transplanted to the cold soil, the easterly atmosphere of Major Maitland's dominion. To him and to their children her gentle kindness, her tender reluctance to wound the humblest creature, was but weakness almost contemptible weakness, and this idea permeated their judgment of her in all things. No one thought of consulting her or taking her opinion or crediting her with the ability she really possessed. Not that they were unkind; they were all well-disposed, practical lads and lasses—fond of their mother in a way, but scarce companions. She could never open her heart to any of them, except to Jack, the strongest and most combative of them all.

Between the mother and her younger son there was profound sympathy, and the dream of Jack's maturer manhood was to make the evening of his mother's days peaceful, bright, and full of affection and warmth.

With his father, Jack had little in common. Major Maitland was narrow and domineering, yet desirous of acting justly toward all men; exceedingly capable within certain limits, and conscientious in the fulfillment of his duties, so far as he understood them. He had been invaluable as an adviser, almost a ruler, to his friend and employer, the late laird of Craigrothie; but years and gout were beginning to enfeeble him, and make his stern and once equable temper irritable, at times querulous.

From the time her son returned Mrs. Maitland began slowly, very slowly, to gain strength; but for several weeks she required the utmost care. The least occupier of her married daughters had hastened to assist in nursing her, and still stayed on. But it was her son's daily visit and quiet talk that comforted and supported the invalid.

With all his tender care for, and anxiety about, his mother, Maitland's thoughts often strayed to the drama he knew was being enacted in London. The composed little figure of Edith, the quaint grace of her unstudied movements, the curious, intelligent simplicity that seemed to expose the tinselled unreality with which she was surrounded, whenever she was brought into contact with it, were perpetually in his mind. The honest preference she had unconsciously shown him had completed the

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W. D. MCKAY

charm she exercised. Not that he allowed himself to believe that at present it was more than the friendliness of instinctive trust; but it might be more. It would be a delicious occupation to win the full womanly love of this delicate, unworldly creature, whose gentleness was not weak, whose ignorance was not dull. She would be a kind, tender daughter to his mother; she would be happy in a quiet country home. What a contrast to his first stormy love affair, and to some slighter experiences through which he had since passed! He often conjectured how she was faring among the shrewd worldlings whose intrigues centered round her. Was he, Jack Maitland, playing an honorable, manly part in letting her fall blindfold into the snare? Yet what could he do? Her wealth was a hindrance. What had he to offer that could in any way balance it? He was pondering these things with more than usual bitterness, because his anxiety respecting his mother had been somewhat relieved. She was able to be moved from her bed to the sofa on the eighth day after his return. And Jack had on the following morning mounted his father's favorite hack to visit a distant part of the estate.

(To be Continued)

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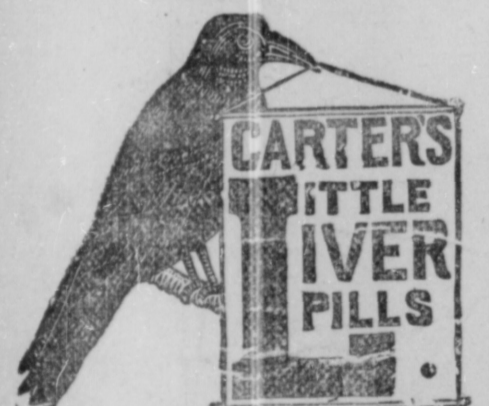
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