

# Beaton's Bargain.

BY MRS. ALEXANDER.

SYNOPSIS.

Mrs. Winton, Lady Mary Hay, Leslie Beaton and Jack Maxwell are members of London's m. r. society set. Beaton is Mrs. Winton'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. Winton 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 IV. (Continued.)

"The ignorant little savage," he exclaimed. "I made the loveliest confession of my feelings you can imagine. It would have melted the heart of a—of a Calmuck, and the little fiend was simply surprised, confused, overwhelmed; yet she told me coolly she thought I had mistaken my own feelings—that she was quite sure I liked Lady Mary better than I did herself; that she was too—too something or other, to be my wife, and that she liked me so much she would rather marry some one else."

"Well, Leslie, you are a greater fool than I took you for," said his sister, frowning sternly.

"Could it be the same face that looked up so tenderly in Jack Maitland's?"

"You tried to shake the tree before the fruit was ripe, now you have lost the game. What do you intend to do?"

"To do! How do you mean? I have acted on your instructions, and made an ass of myself to no purpose. I have scarcely a rap left, and Father Abraham, who advanced me the last supply on the strength of having an heiress in tow, won't give me a sou more. By Heaven I shall lose my character if it is known that I have failed with the unsophisticated one."

"You must not fail," Mrs. Winton returned. "I must repair your mistake; you shall not lose this little simpleton. By your own idiotic rashness you will lose much valuable time. I wonder I have the patience to speak to you; you have been a trouble to us all your life, and you have nearly thrown away your last chance of relieving us of the burden. Now, you must be absolutely guided by me."

"If you explain your plans I'll try and take them in," said Beaton, who was considerably crestfallen.

"Very well. Leave Miss Vivian to me for the present. I will describe your broken-hearted condition, and rouse her compassion. There is a good deal to hope still from the fact that she accused you of liking Lady Mary better than you liked her."

"She is not far wrong," murmured Beaton.

"Do not be childish, Leslie. If you married Lady Mary you would hate each other, and be miserable in two months."

"I should have those two months, though."

"Lady Mary has more sense," continued Mrs. Winton, not heeding him. "You see, though it must be distasteful to her, she has made up her mind to marry Mr. Brown."

"Has old 'Go-bang' proposed?" cried Beaton, eagerly.

"I don't know, and I don't care. I have enough to think of with your affairs and mismanagement. You must go out of sight somewhere; it will be the best and safest way to show your despair."

"But, Jean, I cannot stir without cash, and I tell you I haven't a farthing. You must get Winton to shell out."

"It would be of no use to ask him, and

I would not do it if it were, returned his sister, resolutely. "Winton has been very generous, but you have tried his patience to far. I don't think I could have had you so much here had he not believed you would marry Edith Vivian, and free us from the burden of your maintenance. I want his help myself; I have gone far beyond my allowance; Madame Laure has sent me in a hideous bill."

"Then you must give me some cash yourself," said Beaton, indifferently. "Look here"—he pulled a handful of gold, silver and copper coins from his pocket—"I have a couple of five-pound notes in my dressing-case besides, and that is all between me and destitution. If I run over to Paris or down to Cowes, I must run up an hotel bill into the bargain."

"You shall not run over to Paris or Cowes, Leslie," she interrupted; "you shall go down and bury your woes and yourself at Winton, and I will lend you your railway fare."

"Great heavens, Jean!—you are determined to make me repent my false step. What on earth am I to do at Winton? I shall cut my throat!"

"Better do that than live on a beggarly gentleman," cried Mrs. Winton. "How any one can submit to poverty when a shilling's worth of poison or an ounce of lead would deliver you, is incomprehensible to me. However, I don't mean to keep you long in exile; there is tolerable fishing."

"I hate fishing," ejaculated Beaton. "Old Mrs. Gubbins, the housekeeper, is a very fair cook, and you must write me despairing letters every day—that will occupy you. In a week or two I will bring our little startled fawn to hear reason, then you can come back and do exactly as I bid you."

"Very well; I suppose I may go and confess my sins to Lady Mary before I start."

"It will do you no good."

"Ought we to communicate with that old screw, Dargan?"

"I will think about it," said Mrs. Winton, slowly. "I may ultimately need his help; but if we tell him too soon it might set him on the lookout for some better spec than you have proved."

"Ah! then I may leave Dargan to you. And I suppose you have no more to say?"

"No; and it would be a relief not to see you. I never was so angry with you before. Really, Edith Vivian is a great deal too good for you; she has more sense. I suspect you have been betraying your absurd fancy for Lady Mary more recklessly than I imagined to rouse Edith's suspicions."

"Not more recklessly than you have shown your absurd fancy for Jack Maitland. If I were Winton—"

"You would be a better man than you are," interrupted Mrs. Winton, quietly; but her eyes darkened and she grew pale with anger—"and not put evil constructions on a simple, natural liking for an old friend."

Beaton laughed aloud cynically. "If you defy and irritate me," said his sister, rising and standing erect before him, "I shall give you up; hitherto I have been weak enough to care what became of you. If I turn against you, it will be an exceedingly bad day for you, Leslie Beaton." She opened her purse and threw him a couple of notes. "I expect you to repay me, remember. Now go; I will write to Gubbins in time for post, and tell her to have luncheon ready for you at one to-morrow. You must get away by the 8.30 train in the morning."

She turned from him with a look of contempt, and left the room.

Leslie Beaton followed slowly and tent his steps to the residence of Mrs. Hay, a severe and wealthy dowager, under whose oppressive protection Lady Mary, her daughter-in-law, thought fit for the present to abide.

Mrs. Winton paused in her own sitting-room, and took up some notes and letters, glancing through them mechanically. "I will not speak to her yet," she thought. "Let her chew the cud of sweet and bitter reflection for awhile. What a misfortune to have two such idiots to deal with! Edith's utter ignorance of life, not to say society, prevents her from seeing that she could scarcely do better than marry Leslie. He would make a very tolerable sort of husband, and I could be of immense use to her. As to Leslie, his weakness is too contemptible. How did I come to have such a brother?"

She wrote a few replies to the notes she had read, stopping now and then to descend and to the carriage which all this time had been slowly driven to and fro by the exasperated but sedate coachman, whose patience was often tried by his whimsical and imperious mistress.

Meanwhile Edith, much disturbed and bewildered, had flown away to her own room, and locking the door, sat down in the darkest corner she could find, trying to steady her thoughts after the extraordinary avowal to which she had just listened. Her most vivid impression was immense astonishment that any man should think of her as a wife, especially a man so clever and indifferent to everything as Beaton appeared to be.

Edith had a very humble opinion of herself; not that she was uneasy or self-conscious about her deficiencies—self did not trouble her in any way. She wanted to learn and to enjoy, to help where she



Some people in the world persist in clinging to old methods. There are men who still use a forked stick in place of a modern plow. There are also men, who, when they are troubled with a disordered stomach or liver, resort to the old-fashioned violent remedies that rack and rend the whole body, and while they give temporary relief, in the long run do the entire system a great amount of harm.

Modern science has discovered remedies infinitely superior to these old-fashioned drugs, that do their work by promoting the natural processes of excretion and secretion and gently correcting all circulatory disturbances. When a man feels generally out of sorts, when he loses sleep at night, when he gets up headache and with a bad taste in his mouth in the morning, when he feels dull and lethargic all day, when his appetite is poor and his food distresses him, when work comes hard and recreation is an impossibility, that man, though he may not believe it, is a pretty sick man. He is on the road to consumption, nervous prostration, malaria, or some serious blood disease. In cases of this description a man should resort at once to Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. It is the best medicine for a weak stomach, impaired digestion and disordered liver. It is the great blood-maker and purifier, flesh-builder and nerve tonic. It cures 98 per cent. of all cases of consumption, bronchitis, lingering coughs and kindred ailments. Thousands have testified to its marvelous merits. It is a modern, scientific medicine that aids without goading nature, and that has stood the test for thirty years. Medicine dealers sell it.

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could, and do what her man would do to do diligently. The fact of being an heiress had never penetrated to her understanding; she had never known what it was to have the command of money. Even Mrs. Miles who was mysteriously in awe of her careful brother, never told her she was rich, only that she need not want for anything. Indeed, Mrs. Miles was kept very much in the dark herself; she was an honest, kindly, warm-hearted woman, somewhat indolent and inert. Edith consequently did a great deal more for her than she did for her young charge, and thus the girl grew up singularly unspoiled, and without the least idea that she was of importance to any one except Mrs. Miles. Moreover, she thought herself too plain to be attractive when she thought on the subject at all, which was perhaps never, until dress and adornment was forced on her notice by Mrs. Winton. When comparing herself with two such distinguished-looking women as Lady Mary Hay and her hostess, she decided that her own appearance was poor indeed.

Few girls had ever dreamed less of love and marriage. She had read few novels, and heard less gossip. There was really no one to gossip about at Littlemere. The lovers she had read about in Sir Walter Scott's and Miss Ferrier's stories interested her immensely; but if she ever applied the moral of the tales to herself, it was in the far-away future, when she had emerged from the very low mental status which she allowed herself.

To be kind, considerate, prompt to do any one a service, seemed to Edith a natural and normal state of feeling, and she was too ignorant of life, as it works in the society into which she had drifted so curiously, to understand what was implied by the extraordinary exertion made by Beaton to meet her at the studio, to inspect her progress, and escort her home as he did two or three times a week. Such attentions from a man of Beaton's style and standing would have flattered all or any of the season's debutantes, or even more experienced young ladies; while to Edith it seemed the simplest thing in the world that her guardian's old friend, as she considered him, her dear, delightful Mrs. Winton's brother, should take a kind, perhaps patronizing, interest in herself and her work. She was heartily obliged to Beaton, but slightly distrustful of him, because he seemed to mock at all things; and whenever she took in the drift of his compliments, and that they were really meant for her, she was disposed to think he was laughing at her.

When, therefore, he made an avowal of his ardent affection, and profound desire to make her his wife, she was instinctively incredulous and more frightened than pleased. Why should so grand a gentleman want to marry an ignorant little girl, who was not even pretty? It was quite incomprehensible! Inexplicable as she was, she had caught the expression of his eyes from time to time as he looked at or spoke to Lady Mary; and nature, that marvelous instructor, told her he must be very fond of her attractive ladyship. Now all their pleasant, easy intercourse was at an end, and she really liked Beaton. It would indeed be painful to meet him and Mrs. Winton.

What would she say? Edith felt rather than thought that it was quite possible Mrs. Winton could be very angry, and what more likely to anger her than finding her brother, to whom she was so much attached, and of whom, as it seemed to Edith, she was so proud, had proposed to a little countrified simpleton, which in itself was bad enough, and worse still that she had had the temerity to refuse him!

What should she do if Mrs. Winton was cross and quarreled with her? Though by no means captivated by a life of restless excitement, she felt she could not go back to her former monotonous existence. And her guardians? What would Mr. Tilly say? Beaton had intimated that he had secured her guardian's consent. Would every one be very angry?

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Then she wondered why she did not like to marry Mr. Beaton. It was curious, for he was nice, and good-looking. Next, fancy suggested, "If Mr. Maitland had asked you to be his wife would you have refused?" Conscience instantly answered, "No." Of course, he would never think of asking her. He was far above, out of her reach. It was with no passionate burst of emotion that Edith recognized this; she was not in love with Maitland, or rather she did not know she was in love, and with a sigh of gentle regret she turned from the idea, blushing at her own temerity.

At last her maid tapped at the door to say that Mrs. Winton had come in, and wished to know if Miss Vivian would not have tea.

"No thank you, I have a bad headache, and will lie down till dinner-time," said Edith, beginning to realize the appalling trial before her in meeting Mrs. Winton's keen eyes with such a secret weighing on her soul.

"Shall I bring you a cup of tea here, Miss?"

(To be Continued)

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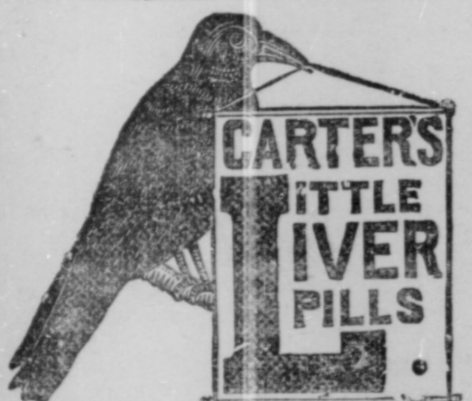
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