HIS HEIRESS;

OR, LOVE IS ALWAYS THE SAME.

Perhaps he is hardly aware with what strange earnestness his wife is perusing his countenance. Muriel sees something about him that warns her it will scarcely be wise to bring herself into prominence in his sight so long as she has Staines in her train, but a mad fit of wilfulness is upon her, and a longing to sound him, to see if the fire so unmistakably smouldering within him will burst at her voice into a flame.

"It is so warm here, it stifles me!" she says to Staines. "Come into the hall."

She moves slowly through the thronged room toward the place where her husband stands, but as she reaches it, she sees he has quitted his position, and is now moving indolently away from her, toward some disused rooms.

Possessed by her one idea, she follows him—Staines always beside her—into a side room half lighten and void of decoration.

Lady Branksmere, not seeing some loose wire in the dim light, catches her foot awkwardly in it, and stumbles. She sways nervously, and puts out her arms as if with an involuntary demand for help; a little rounded "Oh!" of alarm breaks from her lips.

With an exclamation, Staines springs forward and catches her. His fingers close warmly round her lovely naked arm; He is rudely awakened to the present by an arm that coming between him and Lady Branksmere, hurls him backward to where the wall checks and supports him.

When he recovers himself, it is to find Branksmere staring at him with an unpleasantly savage longing on his dark, swarthy face. Staines goes down before that look, and stands, panting heavily, against the friendly wall.

Lady Branksmere has shaken herself free from her husband's grasp. She has thrown up her small, queenly head, and is regarding him fixedly.

Not a word is spoken. A strange horrible silence seems to oppress all three. At length when it has grown almost beyond endurance, Branksmere breaks it. He bursts into a harsh, grating laugh.

"I fear, Captain Staines, that my interference was rather a rough one," he says, lightly. "But when you remember my excess of zeal arose out of my anxiety for Lady Branksmere's safety, I feel sure you will pardon my seeming discourtesy. One or two old world beliefs still cling to me. I was absurd enough to fancy, that I, as her husband was the one to rescue her in—crisis such as this."

Captain Staines bows an acknowledgment of this curiously worded apology.

"I had forgotten the strength of my arm. I did not hurt you I trust!" says Branksmere, with a laugh, slow and cruel. He removes his gaze slowly from Staines and bends it on his wife—who returns it haughtily.

"You have escaped this time," he says, slowly. "But if you will permit me to advise, I should recommend you to avoid unfrequented places in the future. Beaten paths are best. And—one may trip once too often!"

"Sound advice," she returns. "May I hope, my lord, that yourself will take it to heart."

Then, her whole humor changes, and she turns to Staines with the old, calm listlessness upon her.

"This way evidently leads no-whither," she says, indifferently. "Let us return to civilization."

She sweeps leisurely toward the door by which she had entered, and once again enters the world of light without. Slowly, with an unmoved front, she passes down the long cool hall; past Margery, pale, with downcast eyes; past Lord Primrose in a shady nook proposing once again to Lady Anne; past all these and many more goes Lady Branksmere, with Staines always beside her, and always with head erect and a calm brow, though in her soul is raging a tumult of passionate wrath that increases rather than dies as the moments go by.

CHATER XXXI.

Mrs. Amyot looks up at Lady Branksmere, brushes past the cozy nook that contains her, and regards her curiously.

"She is as impassive as a sphinx," she says.

"Scarcely, tres chere; she is safe to break out later on," murmurs Mrs. Vyner, hopefully. "Take heart!"

"If that be so, she will find herself presently the center figure of an imbroglio that I for one should prefer steering clear of. There is something odd about Branksmere's eyes. Ever noticed it?"

"Neither that nor anything else about him. Instinct long since warned me he doesn't admire me, and I never waste my time."

"I am afraid your little story about Lady Branksmere and Staines has some foundation."

"What are you afraid of?"

"Well, I should be sorry, if matters went too far. I like Branksmere, and I tolerate her, though I grant you she is at times a degree impossible."

"If you said she is on rare occasions a degree possible I might follow you. As it is—I have often warned you, my good child, that those quiet ones are never to be trusted, and I expect we shall have an explosion at the castle next autumn. But, hush! here comes the colonel, and I know no one who so cordially detests scandal as that priceless fossil."

"Except me," supplements Mrs. Amyot, "when it is directed against myself.

"I never feel like that," smiles Mrs. Vyner, serenely. The knowledge that the scandal was undeserved would, in my case, raise me above such weak fancies."

"Ah!" says Mrs. Amyot.

"If the colonel means coming, I wish he'd do it, and get over it," exclaims Mrs. Vyner. "He was steering for us with all sails set, and scolding in his eye a moment ago, and now he has come to anchor by Lady Anne. How I wish she would keep him forever. There is a present, now, I would make her without regret."

"It has always been a matter of speculation to me why on earth you married him."

"He has a few pence," returns her friend mildly. "And I always hope he won't die until he has come in for the Bellair title and diamonds, and made me 'my lady.' Besides, I don't think there was anyone else just then."

"There was always Tom."

"Tom!" with an accent of unqualified scorn. "I wonder if Tom could tell you at this moment whether he has five pounds or five thousand in the world. Now what under heaven would I have done with Tom? He is all very well, I grant you, as this, or as that, but as a husband! No, thank you! For the rest I am positive if you were to analyze it, one man is as good as another."

"There is a noble broadness about your views that one would do well to imbibe," says Mrs. Amyot, admiringly. "I own, myself, to a silly prejudice in favor of youth. Ah! Here comes your warrior at last. He looks as if he were about to order out one of his native regiments for instant execution."

"He is only going to order me home. Don't be alarmed. I shan't go," says Mrs. Vyner, smoothly. "He always makes a point of removing me when he thinks I'm having a good time. I confess I have been doing pretty well to-night, and he has a perfect talent for knowing when I'm enjoying myself."

"I wonder you are not a little afraid of him; there is something about his under jaw—that—

"No. I am not afraid. You know that cousin of his, Elfrida West? I wormed a little secret of his out of her, that will stand to me if he ever dares to twit me with any of my shortcomings."

"She betrayed him?"

"She sold him for forty pounds. I paid her that down for it. She always is hard up, that poor Elfrida! and her woman had given her to understand that she would wait no longer for her bill. So she gave away the colonel."

"What a bore these dressmakers are! One would think one could have money for them the moment they chose to ask for it."

"I was immensely obliged to Elfrida's woman for all that. Out of simple gratitude I gave her quite a large order the week later. Yes, doesn't the old man look furious! What has he heard now, I wonder?"

"Perhaps he is tired," suggests Mrs. Amyot, kindly. "Borne down by the burden and heat of the evening, he is naturally anxious to get home."

"He is unnaturally anxious to spoil my sport. To see me happy is to see him regularly on the champ. He is, I assure you, the very dearest old thing!" says the colonel's wife, gayly.

"I hope you don't wrong him," persists Mrs. Amyot, "he is old, you know; he may be sleepy."

"He is old enough, in all conscience. One might perhaps indeed say he is old enough to be once again young enough to be eager for an early couch; but that is not his ailment."

"Well, I dare say he is a little wearing at times," she says, leniently.

"He is about the most unmitigated nuisance I know," returns the charming man's wife promptly.

He has come up to her by this time. He is a tall, soldierly-looking man, at least thirty-five years older than she is, with an imposing moustache.

"What's the hour, eh? Not going to stay here all night, eh, eh?"

"It *is* dull, isn't it?" responds Mrs. Vyner. "I had hoped, darling, seeing you so gay all night that you had not felt it, but as for me—I am positively done to death."

"Humph!" says the colonel.

"Are you coming home now? These mixed assemblies are very trying, don't you think? The butcher and the baker and the candlestick-maker, you know, or at least their equivalents, in the rear of our own set. Don't let me hurry you, Douglas, but I confess I should be glad to put a termination to this dreadful evening."

"M—m—m?" says the colonel. "It didn't occur to me that you were dull to-night."

"I hope I shall never so far forget myself as to look *ennuyee*," smiles Mrs. Vyner, sweetly. "But to you the truth surely may be confessed. I have endured agonies since I entered this house. Indeed, I should say plainly that I have been insufferably bored, only I know that would vex you, because it would not be nice to the poor county. But really these mixed entertainments are very trying, and this one is even a trifle more higgledy-piggledy than its fellows." Oh! yes. I have been very dull. Very!"

"The fact of its being mixed is a special reason why we should be careful to cast no slight upon it," returns the colonel. "These—er—strange people have their sensibilities as well as we others. Selfishness, and—er—open disregard of the feelings of those not quite in our own class are defects that should be crushed!"

"You are always right," she murmurs presently, but I do so *want* to go home."

"I see the duchess has not yet gone. Perhaps to avoid even the appearance of giving offense we had better stay another hour."

He walks off with his most military stiffness.

"Dear old man!" breathes his wife. "How generous! how noble-minded! how self-sacrificing he is! See how willing he is to resign his own comfort and linger on here in a social martyrdom for an hour longer, now that he believes that I am—not enjoying myself! Ah! Sir Robert, my ice at last? What a time you have been absent. I quite thought you had been making it."

CHAPTER XXXII.

The heavy, hot silence that is lying over everything out of doors, seems to have rushed inward and wrapped all the house in its languor. The stillness that reigns all round is great enough to be felt; no footsteps fall upon the tessellated floors, no gay laughter rings through the deserted gardens. They have all started on their fourteen-mile drive through the richly wooded country to the tennis match at Lady Blount's. All save Lady Anne, who had gone down to the village to see the vicar's wife and Lady Branksmere and—Staines.

Over Branksmere the stillness remains unbroken, save for the discordant scream of the strutting peacock upon the terraces without. At last there comes a rustle of soft garments in the dim hall, and one of the big dogs gives himself a mighty shake, and goes to meet his mistress. Almost at the same instant a side door is slowly opened, and Captain Staines emerges from the gloom beyond.

"Good-morning, or, rather, good-evening, now," he says, taking her proffered hand.

"True," returns she. "It is already noon."

"Your headache is better?" asks he. "I knew the intolerable heat last night was bound to make you ill. The arrangements were far from perfect. They have made a prisoner of you all the morning."

"As a rule, neither heat nor cold affects me—in fact, nothing does much," replies she calmly. "But I confess my head was a trouble to me to-day."

"I have been thinking that perhaps half an hour or so on the island would do you good," says Staines.

"There is scarcely time, is there?" She glances up at the clock. "It is now very nearly four. Those people will be coming home again, and will expect me to be here to give them their tea."

"Tut! that will not be for hours," retorts he gayly. "Not until you have had time to be there and back again, over and over. I promise you shall be back here before they are."

"That, of course: I wonder if I could get to the island and home again in two hours? Now that you have put it into my head I feel as if the lake is the one thing I desire. Oh, for a breeze! And there might be a small one there."

"A foregone conclusion," cries he, gayly. "Let us start at once, then, if your return at the time you say is imperative."

Time is moving away from them, and any moment now may bring Branksmere home to keep the appointment with Muriel, of which she is ignorant, and which Staines has pledged himself to prevent.

"Come, then," she says, languidly, being already prepared for an afternoon stroll.

The walk through the shady wood beneath the scented pines is rich with a sweet fragrance. The way has seemed neither long nor wearying, and it appears a sort of surprise to Muriel when at last they come to its end and emerge upon the borders of the lake, where sits a ferryman to row the visitors to the exquisite little island, about half a mile from the shore.

Stepping into the boat, Muriel, with a vague sense of rest and pleasure full upon her draws off her glove and lets one white slender hand drag idly through the pleasant water. Leisurely the boatman plies his oar, and presently brings them to the tiny beach that belongs to the island. She has almost forgotten the existence of Staines in this vague new-born peace of hers, and is altogether unaware that he has lingered behind her to say a word or two to the ferryman. Presently, however, she hears him hurrying after her.

"You told the man to wait," she asks, anxiously. "You know my stay here must be short."

"I told him that," reassuringly. "I warned him you should be home by a certain hour, so I suppose it will be all right. Let us forget time for the moment," gayly, "and try to enjoy to the full this delicious afternoon."

A little trembling wind has arisen, and is blowing right into their faces. It is so blessed a thing, that Lady Branksmere throws off her hat and gives her burning forehead to its cooling caress.

After a time she sighs wearily and rises to her feet.

"Come let us return," she says. "It is already past the hour."

He rises, too, and she going first and he following they arrive again at the small beach. It is deserted.

"How is this?" asks she coldly looking round at him.

"It is very extraordinary—it is inconceivable," says Staines, "I can't imagine how the fellow could have misunderstood me, and yet—"

"You told him to wait?"

"No. But I very fully explained to him that you wished to be home at a certain hour. I am awfully sorry if any mistake of mine has caused—"

"That is of no consequence at all," she says, contemptuously. "The thing now to be considered is what is best to be done."

"He can not be much longer away." begins Staines, eagerly.

"Half past five already," she exclaims, addressing herself.

It is now close on six o'clock, and still no signs of the ferryman. Good heavens, if he were to forget to come at all! As this horrible thought suggests itself the blood surges wildly up into her face. What will be thought of her by Mrs. Vyner, with her sneering smile, by Mrs. Amyot, with her amused one? What will be thought by ——. Her teeth close savagely upon her under lip, and she turns suddenly upon Staines with a fierce vehemence.

"Do something!" she cries.

"What can I do?" desperately. "All that is left me is to tell you how bitterly I regret—"

All the regret of which you could be capable would not get me home a minute sooner," declares she, impetuously. "Why don't you act? Why do you stand there with that incapable look upon your face? Surely something can be done. There must be a way of attracting the attention of one on the opposite shore. Is there no signal you can make to the man? He may be there, he may hear you. The day—oh no, the evening is so still, that any sound will carry that short distance. Try something—anything."

"There is no need, the man is coming," returns he, pointing across the lake to where a boat can be seen. Presently it is out in the more open water, and in about ten minutes or so he reaches them. Staines goes up to him.

"What do you mean by being an hour late?" he demands in a loud, angry key. Her interview with Branksmere is now an impossibility, and this solitary ramble will damage her in the eyes of her husband.

"I'm not late, sir. It is not yet six o'clock."

"I desired you to be back here at five sharp," declares Staines.

"Six, sir, begging your pardon," says the man firmly.

"Five, I told you! It is unpardonable her ladyship should be subjected to such neglect."

"I am very sorry my lady," mutters the man. "But I quite thought as how the gentleman had said six."

"You shouldn't think," says Staines, but Lady Branksmere checks him.

"Enough has been said," she decides, quietly. "It was a mistake it appears. Let it rest. The thing is to get home now with as little more delay as possible."

The row across the lake is a silent one, and Muriel springs upon the land with a sigh of relief. Staines, pressing half a sovereign into the ferryman's hand, accompanies her swiftly down the narrow woodland path.

"What's that for now, I wonder?" He ponders to himself. "He don't look like a gent as would be free with his tin. To keep silence, is it? Eh! But I knew 'twere six 'e said."

One ray of comfort alone sustains her; she remembers that Branksmere seldom returns from town until the seven o'clock train, and surely she will be safe in her own room before that. As for the others, she may escape them.

She may, and does for five minutes or so, but Branksmere is standing in one of the open windows as she and Staines come down the avenue. Mme. von Thirsk is sitting in a low wicker-chair near him.

"Ah!" she cries, "here is lady Branksmere at last! We all know how difficult it is to drag one's self away from—the warmth of an evening such as this; but I am glad that she has managed to get home before the arrival of the others. Mrs. Vyner's tongue is sharply pointed."

She sighs, and moves toward the door. Branksmere makes her no reply. His eyes have met Muriel's and are resting on them, both can see that the other's face has grown strangely pale.

After a moment or so, Branksmere drops his glance and leaves the window.

"That woman again!" mutters Muriel between her teeth. Her voice is very low, but Staines hears her.

"I have already warned you," he reminds her. "It will be insult upon insult, heaped!" And then, as she moves away from him through the dark old hall, he follows her to say a last impressive word. "Remember! there is always a remedy!" he whispers, in a low tone.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

TIMBER FROM THE PACIFIC.

The Good Ship "Highlands" Arrives at Montreal After a Long Voyage.

Lying in the lower basin of the Lachine canal is the British barque "Highlands," resting quietly after a very long voyage. This good vessel is laden with Oregon pine, or, more properly, fir from British Columbia and it is the first time that any timber from the Pacific Coast has been brought to Montreal by way of the Horn. Last year several large sticks were brought over the Canadian Pacific Railway, and everybody wondered at their size. There are just as large sticks on board the "Highlands." The "Highlands" is a New Brunswicker, a handsome vessel, and a good sailer. Her registered tonnage, is 1,234 tons, and she was built at St. John, N. B., about ten years ago. She has been engaged in the India and China trade until recently.

Captain H. P. Owen, a hardy New Brunswicker, is in command. The "Highlands" took cargo at Vancouver, consisting of 697,000 feet of Oregon pine, of large sizes, and 200,000 feet of cedar boards, and sailed on Jan. 21 last. The early part of the voyage was clear sailing, but after leaving the trade winds the weather became unsettled, and the vessel encountered heavy gales. In latitude 52 degrees south, and longitude 107 west, the "Highlands" ran into a severe hurricane, and her decks were swept from stem to stern by big waves. The second mate, Thomas Scott, was caught by one of these and swept overboard and drowned.

"We could not save him," said the captain. "We were running very fast, and the poor fellow was out of sight in an instant." That was April 1. The Horn was rounded during the middle of April and the weather was, as it generally is in that locality, unsettled and bad. But after having worked around the worst of the voyage was over, and the "Highlands" sailed the Atlantic at a good clip, arriving in Quebec 136 days from Vancouver. "That was very good sailing," remarked the captain, "but we would have got here a few days sooner only we knocked about the Gulf a good bit."

The "Highlands" furled her sails about twenty miles below Quebec and made the run up the river in tow of the tug "Lake." The cargo is consigned to J. & B. Grier, lumber merchants, of Montreal, and the enterprise is experimental. Should this prove successful the same firm intends to bring out other vessels. The Messrs. Grier will retain about two-thirds of the cargo for their local trade, and the balance will be shipped west and exported to Glasgow. The specification contains some very fine special grained cedar and pine lumber, and timber of very large dimensions. There is one stick seventy-five feet long and three feet square straight and perfect. It is to be hoped that the enterprise proves successful, and that a trade with the Pacific province will be firmly established.

The Longest Fence in the World.

A wire-netting fence of a total length of 1,236 miles has been erected in Australia as a protection against the rabbit pest from which the Australian colonies have suffered so much during the past few years, and with a view to checking the onward march of these objectionable rodents. The rabbits were introduced into Australia a few years ago for the purposes of food for the Colonists; they have since multiplied so rapidly that they have become a pest. Some idea of the nuisance may be gathered from the fact that a single pair of rabbits, if unchecked, can multiply in four years into 1,250,000. The Cabinet of Sydney, New South Wales, in 1887 destroyed 25,300,000 rabbits, having spent £700,000 in four years to mitigate this pest; 100,000,000 acres of land are estimated, on high authority, to have been more or less injured by them. To check their onward course, a fence of 290 miles between the Macquarie and Darling rivers was made at a cost of £24,000; another of 346 miles from the Murray River, north; another of 260 miles on the southern line of Queensland; and another of 340 miles from Albany to the Macquarie, or 1,236 miles in all; but the rabbits broke through. The rabbit-skins exported from New South Wales yearly average 15,000,000; and those from Victoria in Australia 3,000,000; A thousand bales of their skins are annually exported from South Australia, chiefly to the English markets, and yet there appears to be hardly any diminution in the number of these pests.

In answer to a prize offered by a French paper for the best examination of microscopic writing, a constant reader sent in the whole history of Christopher Columbus written on an egg. Another wrote on the back of a cabinet photograph Francois Coppee's novel of "Henriette" of 19,000 words.

ENGLAND TAKES UGANDA.

She Declares a Protectorate and Enlist Emin's Old Soudanese Soldiers.

It was reported a few days ago that on April 1 the East Africa Company hauled down its flag in Uganda, and Sir Gerald Portal, as representative of the British Government, hoisted the union jack and proclaimed an imperial protectorate over the country. She could not afford to damage her prestige as a colonizing power by retreating from this country. Moreover, it is not to her interest in a material sense to abandon Uganda, for, though the country may long continue to be a drain upon the treasury, it has great elements of growth, and all white men who have been there say that after the completion of the railroad from the coast it may be made a profitable colony.

Capt. Macdonald has been appointed British Resident of Kampala, on the north coast of Victoria Nyanza, near the capital of King Mwanga. Portal did not find it necessary to enter into negotiations with the ruler of Uganda, as the British Government has succeeded to the rights which were obtained by treaty from the King and his councillors by the British East Africa Company. Treaty making in Uganda is quite different from treaty making with most African chiefs. Uganda is not quite a savage land, but has long enjoyed an infant civilization. The King and chiefs thoroughly understand the nature of a written contract, and they consider nothing definitely binding till it is written down. Most of them are able to write. When they made their treaty with the British East Africa Company every clause was discussed in all its bearings, words were altered, and the white men were astonished at the keenness displayed by the natives in forecasting the bearing which every stipulation would have upon their country and its people. The rights which the whites have acquired, therefore, in Uganda, are a matter of record, attested by the King's mark, for the young potentate cannot write, and by the signatures of his principal chiefs.

One important question which confronted Sir Gerald Portal when he hoisted the union jack was what would be done with the many hundreds of Soudanese troops, the vestiges of Emin's force, who had been brought into Uganda by Capt. Lugard, acting in behalf of the British East Africa Company. They were an element of danger unless they could be made the employees of the British Government. Two years ago Capt. Lugard found these Soudanese near the south of Albert Nyanza. He induced them to travel almost due south to Toru, where he built five forts between Albert Lake and Lake Albert Edward. The army he installed in these five forts numbered, with their women and children, over 8,000 souls. He built the forts in order to protect the northwestern border of Uganda from the inroads of hostile Kabarega, the powerful ruler of Unyoro, and while guarding this border he would also prevent the subjects of Kabarega from raiding along the shores of Albert Edward, where they had been capturing many hundreds of slaves.

In these forts Portal found the Soudanese still forming a bulwark against the hostile natives to the northeast. He decided to abandon the two most northern forts and increase the garrisons of the other strongholds. So he has taken all the Soudanese into the service of the British Government, and they will continue to form the protection of a part of the Uganda frontier. Large detachments of the Soudanese have been transferred to Kampala, where they will be subject to the orders of the British Resident. They are strong enough to intimidate the King and his councillors should they meditate any resistance to the British.

The establishment of British rule in Uganda will doubtless prove a blessing to the country. The natives are divided into Catholic, Protestant and heathen parties, whose fanaticism has been so wrought upon by their religious teachers that they are almost at sword points. It would require only the removal of the superior power now controlling them to plunge the country into the worst phases of civil war and anarchy. But the proud kingdom of Uganda has reached its end. The King will remain on his throne only if he consents to be a willing tool in the hands of the British. The dynasty that has ruled the country since the days of Queen Elizabeth has been deprived of its power, and Mwanga, the last of the royal line, is now a king in little more than name.

It is little wonder that he and his advisers a few years ago undertook with fire and sword to root out the European influences that were getting a foothold in their country. They asserted then that the missionaries and other whites were merely the opening wedge, and that the days of Uganda's independence were numbered unless the whites were turned out. Circumstances were too much for them, and, in spite of the terrible persecutions that raged against the Europeans and their native converts, the power of the intruders has constantly increased, and now Uganda is a mere dependency, and will become more and more completely dominated by foreigners.

Cannibalism Among Escaped Convicts.

The Vladivostock, published in the Russian Pacific settlement of that name, gives a terrible account of the treatment of Russian convicts on the island of Onora. The investigation recently made into the charge of gross and barbarous cruelty preferred against a certain Khanoff, chief labor overseer of the penal island, has resulted in that official's suspension and arrest. This Khanoff, who was himself originally sent out as a deported convict, perpetrated such intolerable tortures upon the unfortunate convicts under his charge that twenty of them mutilated themselves in a dreadful manner, in order to free themselves from the labor yoke of this official miscreant. A much larger number made their escape into the Taiga, where they suffered indescribable misery from hunger and sickness. A recaptured refugee from the Taiga had in his possession some pieces of human flesh, and his confession that the escaped prisoners murdered and ate the physically weaker of their companions has, it is stated, been confirmed by subsequent discoveries.

The oldest railway in Germany is that between Nuremburg and Furth, which was opened in December, 1835—ten years after passenger traffic had begun on the Stockton and Darlington line. It is worked very economically, and pays a handsome dividend.