

# HIS HEIRESS;

OR, LOVE IS ALWAYS THE SAME.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

"I don't see how we can do much more to the altar without the grapes," says Margery, standing well back from the rails, with her charming head delicately poised to one side the better to comprehend the effect of her work. "They should be here by this time. I doubt that Brankmere's gardener is a man of his word."

"It is most remiss of him," says Mr. Goldie severely. Mr. Goldie is the curate; a young man of faultless morals and irreproachable clothes, with botching blue eyes and nice plump cheeks, who has been following Miss Daryl about all the day (indeed, for the matter of that, all the year), and who seems to have small object in life except to stare mutely at her and hang upon her slightest word.

"They will be here soon, Meg. It was my fault—the delay," says Lady Brankmere, who has come down to look around her perhaps, because she certainly hasn't assisted them in any way. She is looking pale, and not altogether her best; one must be happy to look that.

"Let us see to the completion of the chancel then," says Mr. Goldie in his most pompous tone. "I fear those we left in charge" (he says the "we" with a fond but unfortunately rather foolish look at Margery), "are not quite as steady as we could wish them."

Miss Daryl, with an inward regret that she can not make him as unsteady as she could wish him, follows him into the presence of a most boisterous group who are busy amongst ferns and cauliflowers. Tommy Paulyn on the top of the ladder is giving away to much abuse of the boys, interlarded with tender speeches directed at the bevy of pretty damsels beneath.

"Look at Meg trying to wear out her fingers with that thorny stuff," says Peter, admiringly. "Was there ever so plastic a being? Idolent to-day, full of pluck to-morrow. Her nails are one of her good points, she might consider them."

"It seems to me," puts in Mr. Goldie, mildly, with a reproachful glance at the young men round them, amongst whom are Curzon Bellew and Mr. Paulyn, "that Miss Daryl might be spared such arduous work. Her zeal is so great that it outstrips her strength."

"It strips her skin," supplements the Hon. Tommy, who seldom minces matters. "It will play old Harry with her hands, and they used to be tolerable."

"I think it is not well that you should in such a public—in fact in such a sacred place, discuss your cousin at all. It would be offensive to many, I am sure, to be spoken of. Could she—that is, would she—I mean—flourish hopelessly—were she the object of my affections I should—"

"Oh! Mr. Goldie, to call poor Margery an 'object'! I wouldn't have believed it of you. And we used to think you quite her friend! Margery!" calling lustily, "do you know what Mr. Goldie says of—"

"No, no, no, I entreat!" exclaimed the poor curate, almost laying his hand on Peter's mouth, who is in ecstasies. "I meant—only to defend your sister from—"

"And who the deuce are you, sir, to set yourself up as Miss Daryl's champion?" exclaims Bellew, with a burst of wrath that has been gathering above the head of the luckless curate for over a month. "When she needs a friend to plead her cause, she will know where to look for an older one than you!"

After this, chaos—and a general rout. The by-standers very wisely abscond, and even Margery herself very meekly slips round a corner into the vestry-room, feeling assured that Curzon's black looks and Mr. Goldie's red ones have something to do with her.

But in the vestry vengeance overtakes her. Mr. Goldie, either stung to action by Bellew's conduct, or eager to "put it to the touch, to win or lose at all," follows her there and lays himself, his goods and chattels, all (which is very little) at her feet. It takes only a few minutes, and then Margery emerges again into the wider air outside, a little flushed, a little repentant perhaps for those half hours of innocent coquetry that had led the wretched man to his doom—to find herself in the midst of a home-group composed of Peter, Dick, Angelica, and Mr. Bellew. The latter is standing gloomily apart; the others make towards her.

"Tell us how he got through it," says Dick, seizing her arm. "Perhaps there may be a brotherly pinch inclosed in his grasp, because he receives an instant answer."

"Well, he said—Oh, Dick, don't—"

"What a story!" exclaims Angelica, very naturally.

"What did he say?" asks Angelica.

"He said," returns Miss Daryl desperately, "Will you? Won't you! Don't you? At which I said (not dreaming what the old absurdity was thinking of), 'Shall I? Shall I? Do I? What? And then it all came out! And I'm sure I am very sorry, because I never meant to encourage him.'"

"Not you," says Peter. "A scalp more or less is nothing to you, bless you. Well, and what did you say?"

"You needn't jeer at me," says Meg reproachfully. "I may be bad, but, at all events, I am not worse! And I know I never led him on as far as I did the others, because—"

She stops abruptly, her eyes having by chance lighted upon the wrathful visage of Bellew, who has been lounging in the shade of the lectern.

"I want to speak to you," exclaims he, grasping her by the ribbons that ornament the side of her gown as she endeavors to slip past him. Of course the ribbons give way, and he finds himself the happy possessor of them, with a most indignant Margery demanding an explanation of his conduct.

"I really do wish, Curzon, you would try to learn the meaning of the word 'manners,'" she says, angrily, looking at the ravished ribbons. "I have always told you your temper will be your destruction. Now, see where it has led you." Secretly she is delighted at the chance afforded her of putting him in the wrong.

"I am sorry for your gown," says Mr. Bellew, who indeed does look rather shocked. "But speak to you I will. So all this last month, when you were pretending to be so quiet, you were cajoling that miserable Goldie into falling in love with you."

"What do you mean, Curzon? Do you

know what you are saying? Are you going to tell me that I encouraged him?—A jealous man makes a miserable home," quotes she, sententiously.

"Who is jealous? Do you think I should feel jealous of that unfortunate little long-tailed parson in there? Give me credit for better sense than that. No, I am only annoyed that you should—er—that he should—that—er—in fact—"

"We should," suggests Miss Daryl, demurely, as he breaks down hopelessly.

"I'm a cross old cat, am I not?" she says, penitently, tucking her arm into his. "Never mind I'm very fond of you, after all, in spite of your many enormities."

"You are an angel," retorts he with all the sweet folly of a real lover. He takes her hands and lifts them.

At this instant a piercing cry of agony comes to them from the inner porch! Margery's face blanches.

"What was that? What?" she cries, in a terrible whisper. And then—"It was May's voice," she says, and rushes past him to the spot whence the sound came.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Upon the stone pavement the little form is lying motionless. The ladder from which she had fallen is still quivering from the shock. There is a moment's breathless pause, and then it is Lady Brankmere—the cold, the impassive—who first reaches her. She gathers the little still child gently to her breast, holding her to her with a pressure, passionate, but very soft, and looks up at Curzon—who, with Margery, is at her side almost at once—with a glance full of the acutest anguish.

The despair in her eyes, startles Mrs. Daryl, and even at this supreme moment sets her wondering. If this undemonstrative woman can thus love a little sister, how could she not love— She hardly finishes her own thought, a moan from the child going to her very heart.

"I will take her home with me. Who will go for a doctor?" demands Lady Brankmere, staggering to her feet with Curzon's aid, but never losing her hold of the injured child.

"Peter has already gone. But we have told him to go direct home," says Margery. "Dear Muriel, the doctor will be there before us, so you see it would be madness to take her to the Castle. Come with us, and hear what his opinion will be." She breaks down a little. "Oh, it must be a favorable one," she sobs, miserably.

"After all, it is! 'May had sustained a severe shock,' said little Doctor Bland; had fractured her collar-bone and bruised one arm very badly, but otherwise there was no reason for supposing she would not be on her feet again in no time. Lady Brankmere having listened to this comforting assurance, had suffered herself to be driven home with the declared intention of coming up again to-night to hear the very last account, at eleven possibly—certainly not before—as there was some prosy old country folk to dinner."

She bids them good-night and disappears from them into the darkness of the rhododendrons beyond.

It is an entire surprise to herself when half-way up the avenue, at the spot where one turns aside to gain the woodland path that will lead into the Brankmere domain, a dark figure emerges from a clump of myrtles and stands before her. It is Captain Staines. A sense of caution, suggested by the maid's presence compels him to meet her coldly, and as one might who was surprised at her presence here at such a late hour.

"Rather late for you, Lady Brankmere, isn't it? Hadn't a suspicion I should meet anything human when I came up here for my usual stroll. As a rule my cigar and I have it all to ourselves."

Even Muriel herself believes him. "My little sister was not well," she explains, curtly. "I came to bid her good-night, and hear the very latest news."

"How is she now?" he asks in a low whisper. "I would have gone up to the house to ask but you know I am not a favorite up there."

"She is better," she answered softly; "and as for grief—there is always grief."

"Not always. And even if there is, there is love the purifier, the sweetener of our lives, to step in and conquer it."

"Is there," her tone was listless. Already a doubt of the love of those she had left behind in the old home is torturing her. She feels cast off, abandoned.

"Does your heart hold a doubt of it? Oh! Muriel, if I dared speak—"

"Well, you dare not," interrupts she, coldly. Then abruptly, "When do you leave this place?"

"I don't know. I can not bring myself to leave it."

"But why—why?" with feverish impatience.

"I have told you long ago. I can not leave you and your troubles."

"What are my troubles to you?" demands she, fiercely. "Let them lie. There is but one service you can do me. Yet you shrink from it."

"Why should my absence serve you?" asks he, boldly. You bid me be silent; but how can I refrain from speech when many of your sorrows are but too well known to me; your trials—"

"Of which you are chiefest," cries she, with quick vehemence. "Can you not guess what your staying means to me? Scorn, insult, contempt!" She presses her hands forcibly together. "Go!" she mutters, in a low, compressed tone. "When will you go?"

"When you will come with me!"

The words are spoken! Given to the air! Nothing can recall them!

"Is there no friendship?" she asks at last, slowly, sorrowfully.

"What is friendship?" returns Staines. "It is so poor a thing that no man knows where it begins or where it ends. A touch of flattery may blow it into a flame; a dispute about a five-pound note will kill it. I do not profess friendship for you. I do not believe in it; there is something stronger, more enduring than that. Muriel, trust in me."

They have reached the grassy hollow beyond the wood that lets the house be seen. Beyond them lies a bare slope of lawn, and then the terraces and the drawing-room windows. Within the embrasure of one window two figures standing side by side can be distinctly seen.

That one is Lord Brankmere, the other Mrs. Von Thirsk, becomes apparent to Muriel at a glance.

Going to the window, Brankmere gazes out into the gloomy beyond, that can hardly be called darkness. Against the background of giant firs—in the very center of the lawn—two figures stand out prominent.

"You know I warned you," whispers madame in his ear, creeping close to him and laying a hand upon his arm.

Something in his face unnerves her and renders her tone tremulous. He shakes her off as though she were a viper.

"Leave me!" he says between his teeth, addressing her, but never removing his gaze from the two forms advancing toward him across the dewy lawn.

For a moment madame regards him strangely. There is no rancor in her glance, there is nothing indeed but a sudden despair. Is this to be the end of it all? Has Staines, her own common sense, lied to her? Is this woman, this soulless creature who is incapable of appreciating him, the prosessor of his heart? Until this instant she had disbelieved it, but now—with that expression in his eyes? She had dreamed strange dreams of a divorce—a separation—a time when she, whose whole soul is in his keeping, might have stolen into his heart. But swift as a flash all hope has died within her. The wages for which she had so toiled will now be hers. And yet, great Heaven! how she has loved this man; how she has admired the stanchness, the nobility of him; the strength that has enabled him to risk his chance of happiness, all for the sake of saving the honor of another! A sense of age, of weakness, oppresses her as she steals slowly from the room.

Brankmere has not noticed her departure; he is still gazing from the window.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

Muriel, as she approached the Castle with Staines, had noticed the abrupt going of madame from the window. A curious smile, full of bitterness rises to her lips.

"A precaution," she mutters to herself, "taken too late."

"Shall I come with you any farther?"

"Why not?" she answers coldly, a touch of reckless defiance in her voice.

"As you will," says Staines, with a rather overdone assumption of alacrity. They have gained the balcony steps by this time, Bridgman has gone round the house to enter by another way, and Muriel mounts the steps with a certain buoyancy in her step, a sort of levity of carelessness that surprises even herself, and that her companion is far from sharing.

But it is not she Brankmere receives after all. His eye, black with passion, has gone past her, to where in the semidarkness the shrinking form of Staines may be seen.

"We have had enough of this, I think," says Brankmere, in a dull terrible one, striding forward. Muriel would have stopped him, but he put her aside as if she were an infant, and reaching Staines, seizes him by the throat, and lifting him in his powerful grasp, drops him right over the balcony. The thud of his body can be distinctly heard as it gains the ground.

It is all the work of an instant. It seems to kill the venom in Brankmere and to do him good. Whether his enemy is lying writhing in pain with a broken back, or has escaped unhurt, is of equal value to him apparently, as his face is almost calm when he closes the window and turns to confront his wife. If he had expected an outburst of sympathy for the sufferer on her part, he is mistaken.

"I fear you have hurt him," she says coldly.

"I hope so," deliberately.

"I met him by accident as I left the Towers, and he very naturally accompanied me here."

"I should fling you after him if I for a moment doubted the truth of that statement."

Lady Brankmere, with a superb gesture, full of scorn, sweeps from the room.

She flings wide her casement, as though athirst for air, and as the dawn comes slowly up, and the first cold breath of morn salutes her brow, her final resolve is formed.

## CHAPTER XL.

Muriel's fatal resolution once formed, she hastens the completion of it. When next Staines met her, she actually laid plain the way for him. She acquiesced in all his plans; but so coldly, that he was both puzzled and piqued by her manner.

To him, departure from this part of the world is imperative; steeped to his very eyes in debt, both here and in town, nothing is left him but an immediate and secret disappearance from the land of his sins. To live abroad on that thousand a year so considerably bestowed upon Lady Brankmere for her husband, is the little game that for some time has presented itself to him as being worthy of notice.

The thought of leaving England with Lady Brankmere (who is the most desirable woman in the world in his eyes), and this sum, seems gold in his eyes, and her yielding, however coldly accorded, a success.

It is a week later, and a cold, dull evening when Lady Brankmere, with a traveling-cloak thrown across her arm, turns the handle of her husband's private room and enters it, to find him seated at a table at the other end.

"It is a mistake to waste words in explanation," she says. "Hear me once for all. I leave this house to-night, forever."

"Ah!" says Brankmere. And with whom? he asks, looking directly at her. His tone is calm.

"Captain Staines," returns she, as calmly. Brankmere's face remains impassive.

"May I ask the reason of this sudden determination?" he asks, presently.

"I think—coldly—"you hardly need. I have no time to waste."

"In such mad haste to be gone? Even so, I must press you for an answer, if only that I may be able to give it to my questioners hereafter."

"Say I am unreasonable—fanciful if you will—anything, slowly, 'but the truth! That is too shameful! Say—I don't care what you say," she ends abruptly.

"I can readily believe it. A woman bent on taking such a step as yours would naturally be indifferent to public opinion. And so this is to be the end of it?"

"I hope so. So far as you and I are concerned."

"Your chief desire is to escape from me?"

"And—her?"

"Pshaw! let us keep to sense. Your old affection for this man has induced you to leave me? I would at least hear you say so. You leave me to join your lover. Is that so?"

A slow smile curls her lip. "If it will make you any the happier, leave it so."

"Did it never suggest itself to you that you might have separated yourself from me in a more decent fashion? You might have gone alone."

"It is too late now for suggestions. I have given him my promise."

"Once you made me a promise!" He pauses here, but her tired face showing no sign of relenting, he refuses to continue his subject. "Did it never strike you that I might prevent this mad act of yours?"

"To seek to detain me is the last thing that would enter into your head."

"The very last. You speak truly there."

"At last you acknowledge something. Why not acknowledge all?" asks she, lifting to his face that is passion pale. "Your tenderness for madame—all."

"I almost wish I could. Then, at least, there might be a chance of gaining absolution; but as it stands, you see," coldly, "there is nothing to confess."

"You lie to the last," she says. "And yet even to gain your wife, you refuse to let her go."

"That would not have gained me my wife. And yet—" He looks at her strangely with a face grown suddenly white. "If I were now to prove false to my friendship and gratitude to my grandmother's faithful friend."

"The time is over for explanations," exclaims she, hastily, waving aside his words by a gesture of the hand.

Silence falls between them after this, a lengthened silence broken at last by him.

"When do you go?" asks he, abruptly.

"Now."

"Staines is in waiting?"

"Yes."

"You have probably made others aware of this move?" As Brankmere asks this question he regards her keenly.

"No. You alone know of it."

"It was extremely kind of you to give me such timely warning. It takes away a good deal of the awkwardness of a vulgar discovery. I am sincerely obliged to you," he says. "And, now, one other word before we part. Do you think you will be happy with this—Staines?"

"I don't know. Is there such a thing as happiness?" asks she in turn, lifting to his her great, somber, mournful eyes. "At least he loves me. I shall have love—the one thing hitherto denied me."

"You are aware, perhaps, that Staines is penniless?"

"I haven't heard it," listlessly. "But even if it is true it will not distress me. I would welcome poverty—anything—to escape the life I am now leading."

"You propose leading another where money will be no object, or at least where very little will suffice? May I ask if you intend living with—your friend—on your jointure?"

"Certainly not," flushing hotly. "That I formally resign, now, at once and forever."

"Does—your friend—know that you are determined to accept nothing at my hands for the future?"

"No."

"You have not mentioned the subject to him?"

"No. There was no necessity."

"Ah!" says Brankmere, "I think, however, I would have mentioned it had I been you!"

"That doesn't concern me; I have no further interest in it."

"And—he—your—friend—really knows nothing of this?"

"Why should he?" haughtily.

"Ah! that is just it. Why, indeed? No doubt love, the all-mighty, will be more to him than— Did I understand you to say you leave this house to-night?"

"Yes."

"Will you permit me to order one of the carriages for you; or has your friend arranged for all?"

"You are pleased to be insolent, sir, but—"

"The night is cold: let me at least—"

"pouring out a glass of wine—" induce you to take this before encountering the chilly air."

"Thank you; no. I shall never again, I hope, touch anything in this house."

"You will permit me to see you as far as the wicket gate."

"But no further," hastily.

"If you forbid it, certainly not. I presume you are taking the first step alone?"

"Why, no. As it happens you are leading me in it." A short untuneful laugh parts her lips.

"Captain Staines is not to meet you here?"

Her step grows more hurried. Arrived at the wicket gate, she stops abruptly.

"Here we part," she says aloud. And even as the words pass her lips she becomes aware of a dark figure standing in the shadow at the other side of the gate. A smothered ejaculation falls from Brankmere. Striding forward he lays his hand upon the arm of Staines.

## CHAPTER XLI.

Staines had evidently mistaken the place of appointment, or else had come this much further in his anxiety to meet Lady Brankmere.

"Ha, sir! Well met! This is an unexpected pleasure!" says Brankmere, in a high, clear voice, and with a laugh that makes the other's blood run a little colder in his veins.

There is a dead pause.

"Your usual urbanity seems to have deserted you. He retreats still further into the shade of the laurels as Brankmere deliberately approaches him—as with a purpose—and with an expression in his eye of suppressed but deadly fury. Perhaps the scene would now have had a speedy end had not an interruption occurred at this moment that attracts the attention of all three.

Along the path that leads to the wicket gate the sound of running footsteps may be distinctly heard, and presently a small rounded figure comes into sight, and in another instant Mrs. Billy's amongst them. The surprise she evinces at their presence here at this hour is open and immense. Then her glance grows keen, and it takes her but a little time to fully grasp the situation, or at least the headings of it.

"I have accomplished my task half-way. I wanted to see you," she says, lightly, smiling at Muriel. "Are you really going to Lady Blount's to-morrow? If so, will

you come with Margery and me? The night was so pleasant I persuaded Peter to walk out with me. He has gone round to the yard to see the men about some dog, but I came straight on this way."

Slowly she had been reading each face, one after the other. She turns her attention from Brankmere to Staines, who has grown livid, and going deliberately up to him lays her hand upon his arm.

"You here, too," she cries, in her gay, pretty voice; "But doesn't the whole scene remind you of the old days, when in the gardens at Wiesbaden we used to wander beneath the lindens, you and I? How you swore to me fidelity, eh? To me!"

"Ah! and those other days," begins she, again, lightly, but now with a thrill running through her voice—a thrill of angry scorn. "You remember—"

"Nothing," interrupts he hoarsely, breaking away from her at last. Lady Brankmere has roused from her lethargy, and has drawn a step nearer, her large gray eyes dilated, her breath coming from her heavily.

"Nothing!" repeats Mrs. Billy, in a tone even more distinct. "Let me recall to your mind that never-to-be-forgotten night at Carlsbad when first we met! That sunny morn amongst the flowers at Schlangenbad. What! has all slipped from your treacherous memory?"

Staines makes an effort to speak, but fails.

"At least you will remember the last night on which we met? What? Not even that? It was on that very night that the unpleasant little affair, occurred at the Comte de Grales' room. Perhaps" (airily) "you can remember that?"

"This is the man, then?" asks Brankmere.

"Why, yes. Seeing him, how can you doubt it? Mark the noble bearing of him," smiles Mrs. Billy, pointing to Staines, who is covering before her.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## LIKE A SHALLOW SAUCER.

**The Bed of the Atlantic Grows Lower Regularly Toward the Center.**

Proceeding westward from the Irish coast the ocean bed deepens very gradually; in fact, for the first 230 miles the gradient is but six feet to the mile. In the next twenty miles, however, the fall is over 6,000 feet, and so precipitous is the sudden descent that in many places depths of 1,200 to 1,600 fathoms are encountered in very close proximity to the 100-fathom line. With the depth of 1,800 to 2,000 fathoms the sea bed in this part of the Atlantic becomes a slightly undulating plain, whose gradients are so light that they show but little alteration of depth for 1,200 miles. The extraordinary flatness of these submarine prairies renders the familiar simile of the basin rather inappropriate. The hollow of the Atlantic is not strictly a basin whose depth increases regularly toward the center; it is described by the *Nautical Magazine* as rather a saucer or dish-like one, so even is the contour of its bed. The greatest depth in the Atlantic has been found some 100 miles to the northward of the island of St. Thomas, where soundings of 3,875 fathoms were obtained. The sea round Great Britain can hardly be regarded as forming part of the platform banks of the European continent which the ocean has overflowed. An elevation of the sea bed 100 fathoms would suffice to lay bare the greatest part of the North sea, and join England to Denmark, Holland, Belgium and France. A deep channel of water would run down the west coast of Norway and with this the majority of the firths would be connected. A great part of the Bay of Biscay would disappear; but Spain and Portugal are but little removed from the Atlantic depression. The 100-fathom line approaches very near the west coast and soundings of 1,000 fathoms can be made within twenty miles of Cape St. Vincent and much greater depths have been sounded at distances but little greater than this from the western shores of the Iberian peninsula.

## MAILED TWELVE YEARS AGO.

**A Postal Card Which Reaches Its Foreign Destination After a Long Delay.**

A postal card which has been to Europe and come back has just been turned in at the post office department in Washington, to give the officials there a chance of discovering who is responsible for its long delay in transmission. It was mailed in Washington late in December, 1881, addressed to a bookseller in London, directing him to send to the writer a large number of books which were even then sufficiently rare not to be readily accessible in this country. The card reached its destination late in May, 1892. The bookseller, apparently without noticing the disparity between the date written on the card and the date of receipt, filled the order, after taking time to hunt up the books, which in the course of the ten years' interval, had grown still rarer. The surprise of the author of the card may be imagined when, so long after having concluded that the dealer could not fill his order, he suddenly had this large supply of literature dumped upon him from the postoffice. When he charged the dealer with neglect, the date on the card appears to have been examined for the first time; but it was pleaded that a dealer would be justified in filling such an order in spite of the antiquity of the written date, because he would have a right to assume that his customer had himself been careless about dating the card, a slip of the pen making 1891 read 1881. The New York Evening post thinks that the card must have got into the old post-office in Washington, been postmarked and then lost, slipping possibly into one of the many cracks and crannies of that office. When the office was moved from its old and shabby quarters into the building it now occupies some one doubtless came across the card, and, not noticing its date, dropped it into a mail bag bound for London. The responsibility for the accident is obviously past fixing, and the bookseller in London and his customer in America will have to settle their dispute without the assistance of the postoffice department.

## Her Floral Name.

She—"You know, Reggie, that girls are being called by the names of flowers now, and my sister suggested that I should be called Thistle."

Reggie—"Oh, yes, I see; because you are so sharp?"

She—"Oh, no; she said it was because a donkey loved me."