

# HIS HEIRESS;

OR, LOVE IS ALWAYS THE SAME.

## CHAPTER XVI.

Mrs. Billy is still laughing over May's revelation of Peter.

"Poor Peter," she is saying, "what a shame to betray him! He certainly does say funny things at times."

"Not so funny as Dick," breaks in Blanche, airily. "He told me about you before you came. But I don't think he could have known, because what he said wasn't a bit like you."

"What did he say? Was it too flattering a picture he drew?" asks Wilhelmina.

"Blanche!" calls out Dick. "Go fetch me my fishing-rod from your den, and I'll go and get you some trout for your breakfast-to-morrow."

"Not until you have given me Dick's portrait of me, drawn from his inner consciousness," says Mrs. Daryl, mischievously.

"Now begin—I was—"

"Tall—very—very big," nods the child, solemnly. "And you are quite little, after all. He said, too, that you would be a dreadful woman—a sort of an Orson! and that you would—"

"Blanche!" in an agony from Dick.

"You would hate little girls like me and May, and go about the farm all day in top-boots and leggings. You wouldn't like leggins, would you now?"

"No, no," assents Mrs. Billy.

"And he said you would always carry a cart-whip with you, to strike the farm people with, just like Legree, and Sambo, and Jumbo—rec'lect?"

"Perfectly. Oh, Dick! and so that was what you thought of me. Say, Billy!" accosting Mr. Daryl, who has suddenly appeared in the doorway; a fetchin' description wasn't it?"

"I've known it anywhere," says Daryl, who is now shaking hands with and welcoming Tommy. "Staying with Muriel, eh?" he asks.

"I'll tell you something," says Blanche. "Muriel isn't a bit like the rest of us. Is she now?" When she gets in a rage—"

"Which is about once in a blue moon," interposes Angelica.

"She never stamps, or fumes, or boxes people's ears as Meg does—"

"As anybody would," corrects Blanche. "She only stands straight up like this—drawing up her little fat body into an absurd attempt at dignity—" and opens her eyes wide like this, and fastens up her fingers, so! It is terrifying. I can tell you. We never vexed Muriel if we could help ourselves.

"Muriel was clever, it seems to me," exclaims Mrs. Billy. "I wish you to understand, Billy, that now, at last, I know the way to manage you. The wisdom of babes is astounding. When next you give me a bad time I shall be terrifying. Blanche has just shown me how I shall draw myself up, so, throwing herself into a pretty but exaggerated position, "and open my eyes, so; and close my fingers upon you, so," giving him a dainty little pinch, "and then you'll be done for in no time!" She looks so bright, so gay, so defiant, yet so loving withal that Billy will be forgiv'd for resorting to instant measures for the reducing of her to order. He gives her first a sound shake and then a sound kiss.

"And that's what I'll do!" says he.

"Billy! what a barbarian you are!" cries she, blushing hotly at this breach of etiquette, but presently her laugh is the clearest and merriest amongst them.

"Pity the ball next Thursday isn't a fancy one," says Angelica. "You could manage to look a part I am sure. As a rule, I am told, the Madame Favarts look like Joan of Arcs, and the Marie Stuarts like Serpentes. That must rather destroy the effect."

"What are you going to wear, Meg," asks Tommy Paulyn.

"Nothing."

"Nothing." My dear girl consider. We are advanced enough in all consciences, but—there still is another line!"

"I'm not going," says Miss Daryl. "That is what I mean."

"Not going?"

"No. The fact is, I haven't a gown," declares Margery.

"Nonsense, Meg," cried Mrs. Daryl, sharply. "Of course you are going. Why, your gown came half an hour ago, by the midday train. I'm wool-gathering to-day. That is another thing I forgot to tell you. It is upset!"

But there is no longer a Margery to address. Miss Daryl has flown from the room, and presently returns to them with a mystic mass of tulle and lace carried reverently between her outstretched arms.

"Ah! Willie, what can I say?" whispers she, tears in her soft eyes.

"Why, you little pretty goose! Did you think I could enjoy myself without you? It is all selfishness," smiles Wilhelmina.

"There is Peter!" cries Margery, presently, in an excited tone. "He is coming across the lawn. He must see it, too. She runs to the window and waves her handkerchief with frantic grace.

"Peter! Peter! Pi—i—per," calls she, gayly. At last he hears her, and leisurely crosses the lawn lower down, and comes up to her.

"Whv on earth can't you hurry yourself?" cries she.

"The day is long and patience is a virtue to be cultivated!"

"Perhaps," ironically. "You think you have it."

"I know I have it."

"Pouf! How men deceive themselves:

"Patience is a virtue,

Catch it if you can;

It is seldom in a woman,

But never, never, NE-VER in a man!"

However, don't mind that, Peter! come in until I show you my new gown that Willie has given me. Isn't it a beauty? A lovely thing!"

"It is indeed a charming dress," said Peter.

"Where is Curzon?" he asks, presently.

"I thought he was here."

"He certainly was here a minute or two ago," says Dick.

"He went away," says little May, blandly; "he was cross with Meg, and I think he didn't like Willie to give her the pretty new frock, because the moment he saw it he went out of the window."

"I think he was vexed about something," stammers. "But I don't know what it was."

"He is walking up and down the garden," cries Blanche. "He has his eyes, excitedly, "glue to the ground. I'm sure, I'm certain he is looking for cockroaches."

"Looking for a reason for his ill-temper more likely," says Margery.

"Go and find him, and have it out," says Mr. Paulyn.

"Why should I? One would think it was a tooth you were talking about," returns Miss Daryl. "Go and have it out with him yourself. He was looking daggers at you all the time he was in doors. What have I got to do with him?"

"I leave your own innate sense of truth to answer that question, Margaret," says Mr. Paulyn, solemnly.

"No, you don't," wrathfully, "you want to answer it yourself. It is a most extraordinary thing, Tommy, that you will interfere in the affairs of other people."

"It is my opinion that you have had a right-down flare-up with him," says the Honorable Tommy, unabashed.

"Do you really think, after all your experience, that such an opinion as yours is of any consequence at all?"

"A reg'lar shindy," persists Mr. Paulyn, untouched by this scathing remark.

"Pshaw!" exclaims she, and stepping through the southern window may be seen presently marching off in the direction of the wood, a route that will convey her far from the garden made obnoxious by Mr. Bellew's presence.

She is hardly gone upon her solitary journey when the upper window is darkened by the incoming form of that moody young man.

"If you are," insists Peter, "you'll find her in the beech-wood."

"She has only just gone," puts in Mr. Paulyn.

"The trail is still fresh. If you hurry you'll catch it."

"I'll catch it, any way," returns Mr. Bellew, darkly, and turns his footsteps in the track of his false love.

## CHAPTER XVII.

It was now close upon noon. In the pale somber light, sweet and delicate, is playing upon the opening buds and the greening branches. Through the heavy fir-trees the sun is glinting, making patches of color upon the mossy sward.

The pale dog-violets have all burst out a-flowering, and already the meadows are gay with marguerites, white and yellow. But the finest flower amongst them is the fair, passive maiden, with lily-dropping head, who steps between them with a careless grace, and crossing the brilli-nt meads enters the cool, dark woods beyond.

Perhaps it is sometimes easier to escape from one's self than from a determined lover. This thought occurs to Margery when she sees Mr. Bellew afar off, plainly in hot pursuit of her. She takes no outward heed, however, of the on-comer, but pursues her way as though his near approach is a thing unknown to her.

Now, having arrived at a spot that appears to her to be good for the inevitable interview with Bellew, she takes up a position so full of melancholy, that the young man, drawing every moment nearer, is almost crushed by it. A crackling of the dry leaves beneath his feet gives her the chance of being aware of his presence.

"Is no place safe from you?" she demands in an icy tone. "Am I never to be alone? I wonder after all the cruelty you have shown me, you have the 'hardihood' to approach me."

"I wish I had not said that," says the young man, humbly. "It was an odious word. How could I have used it when speaking to you! But—" He looks at her.

"But what?" imperiously.

"Margery! think how I saw you first to-day."

"How you saw me? In this old gown? To which, if you are not accustomed, you ought to be."

"It is a lovely gown, and you look lovely in it," says Curzon, gloomily. "But it has nothing to do with it. When I came in through the window, you were sitting on that fellow's—" Here he steps shore, and then bursts out again—"knee!" he cries vehemently.

"So that is it?" said Miss Daryl, regarding him contemptuously. "All the vile temper you displayed this morning arose out of the fact that I sat on Tommy Paulyn's knee!" A little irrepressible laugh breaks from her. "You might as well find fault with me for sitting on Billy's or Peter's knee, it would be quite the same thing, I assure you, except that I should prefer Billy; he wouldn't gig one so. So that's all the excuse you can give for your base conduct!

"I wish I had not said that," says the young man, humbly. "It was an odious word. How could I have used it when speaking to you! But—" He looks at her.

"Margery! think how I saw you first to-day."

"How you saw me? In this old gown? To which, if you are not accustomed, you ought to be."

"Willie made it up for me, you mean. Don't mix matters."

"And to-morrow you are going to Sir Mutius Mumm's afternoon?"

"I suppose so. All the world is to be there, and one should at least patronize one's uncle."

"Who is the old man over there?" asks Lord Primrose, presently. Margery, who overhears him, laughs.

"Hush! Mutius Mumm is the word for him," she whispers mischievously.

"What a name!" says Primrose. "So that is really your uncle? You do him credit, let me tell you, and I should think he wants all he can get. What's the matter with his head? He doesn't belong to any particular order, does he?"

"Believe it is not a thing full of interest to us for dress," says Margery, gayly. "We used to make baby bets about it. And every year it grew carefully bigger and bigger! Such an old head as he has!" First we used to compare his patch to a threepenny bit, then as it increased with our years and his, a fourpenny. Then it became a sixpence, then a shilling, then a florin, and then, all at once, as it were: it changed into a five-shilling piece! When it came to that point it staggered us a good deal, I can tell you, but Tommy!" indicating Mr. Paulyn, by a wave of her fan—"came to the rescue. He surmounted the difficulty. A brilliant thought occurred to him. The first—"

"Of a long series," interrupts Mr. Paulyn. "What had she been going to say?"

"I employed but one letter to effect the desired comparison. It instantly made Sir Mutius's pate a plate."

"A cheese-plate," supplements Margery.

"It stayed at that for some time, but now it is a soup plate. 'We expect no more from it.' We feel it has done its duty."

"Why don't he do something for it?" demands Primrose. "It's very abominable his going about like that in his skin."

"I wish you wouldn't talk so unguardedly, my dear fellow," says Halkett, gravely, "when you know there are ladies present. It—it is not decent!"

"Of Sir Mutius? No, that's what I'm preaching," returns Primrose, solidly.

"What an absurd name it is," says Mr. Amyot, laughing. "Mutius Mumm. Oh! it is too ridiculous!"

"He and Aunt Salina, as he calls her, are about the most absurd pair in the world."

"As for her, she is delicious," protests Mrs. Amyot. "She is a thing apart—voice, ringlets, and all. It is a pity to lose a bit of her."

"You had better make the most of her to-day, then," says Margery, "because she is off to Shoebank next week early. In reality Shoebank is about fifty miles from Primrose, so she is feebly entering a protest here, but if it were at the antipodes she

ed forever?" interrupts he. "Good Heavens! how I wish it had never been coined. Think how seldom I offend you, and don't follow up this one sin to its death. To my death, I verily believe it will be."

"Seldom?" repeats she. "How little you understand yourself. In my opinion, you are the most offending man I know."

"You are talking nonsense!" says Bellew, indignantly. "I am your slave, as all the world knows. It ought—bitterly—" "I can see daily for itself how abject is my submission."

"I don't want a slave!" declares she. "It is very rude of you to suppose so. Am I a South American planter? And to talk of you if you call yourself Mrs. Amyot's shadow—you would be nearer the mark!"

"Stuff!" says Mr. Bellew, more forcibly than elegantly. "You don't believe a word of that. And if I were in love with her, it would only serve you right. We might be quits then."

"Why? I haven't fallen in love with any one in a hopelessly idiotic manner, have I? And as for 'serving me right' why, if you think it would distress me, your falling in love with any one, you are immensely misinformed, and I would advise you to dispense with your mind at once all such illusions."

"You are cruel beyond imagination," he says, slowly. "I hate a heartless woman."

"So do I. For once we are agreed. That is why I care never to part with mine."

"One must possess a thing, to be in a position to part with it."

"True, O King!"

"Have you a heart at all?"

"Who should answer that question but you—you, who possess it?"

"Poof!" says she, contemptuously, "you are but a poor reasoner; a moment ago you doubted my having such an unsatisfactory article, and now you accuse me of having misappropriated yours. How is one to grasp your meaning?"

"We are talking nonsense, declares the young man angrily. "We shall be quarreling soon."

"I never quarrel," declares she, "except with the boys; they like it, so I do it with them out of sheer good nature. But otherwise—"

"Perhaps you think I like it, too?"

"I have told you already that I should not dream of quarreling with you; and as for thinking about you, I never do that."

"You are a shameless coquette!" exclaims Mr. Bellew.

Silence! A terrible silence! No woman, if born a coquette, likes to be called so. Most women who couldn't be coquettish to save their lives, are delighted if you will call them so. Miss Daryl, belonging to the first class is hopelessly offended. She turns deliberately away from Curzon, and clasping her hands behind her back commences an exhaustive survey of the landscape.

She almost forgets Curzon now, as her eyes dwell upon it, and unconsciously she sighs audibly. This resigned expression of a hidden grief is misconstrued by her companion, and adds compulsion to speech.