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CHAPTER XII.

It was a matter of some surprise that the Glaucourts came to London as usual this season, that Judith looked more exquisitely lovely than ever, had still the heart, the courage, some said, to come; for they must know that there had been a good deal of talk. Talk, the word was inadequate to express all that had been said when the engagement was broken off between Judith and that most desirable of all men, George Danvers. It was no good, this time, Lady Glaucourt saying, as she had so often before, with truth at first and mendaciously with regard to Sir Hubert, that Judith had changed her mind. As one woman said:

"One doesn't change one's mind about George Danvers."

While men began to ask themselves if it was so, whether they had better not expose themselves to being laughed at. And worse than that, a little of the truth had transpired.

"There is something odd about it," one woman had said, who was a friend of George Danvers' married sister, the wife of an Irish peer, "and when I asked Letitia about it, she simply wouldn't discuss it. 'I think it is kinder not to speak about it, my dear,' she said, 'in fact, it's the only thing we can do.'

As for the dear old Duchess of Dumfries, who was the best friend Lady Glaucourt had, probably because they were both so unlike, she told Lady Glaucourt frankly:

"My dear Cornelia, I wouldn't say that if I were you, for you know people will only laugh at you."

This was in answer to Lady Glaucourt's oft-repeated remark, the sense of which, as a matter of fact, she was beginning to think was true, although she knew it wasn't:

"Judith is so changeable, so frightfully exacting. I really don't believe she will ever be satisfied with anybody."

"I had to tell her," said the Duchess, "for though heaven knows I'm sorry for her, there is no use in telling more lies than one is obliged to—especially when they are no longer believed."

Yes, it was no use disguising that this year people looked at Judith askance, and she was not asked to quite such exclusive houses as she had been.

She still had a little court of men around her, for her beauty was of that type which resembles a picture by a great artist, round which there is always a crowd grouped in a picture gallery, but she knew the signs of change. Those that still surrounded her, she could divide into types, there were men who had never proposed, who couldn't or wouldn't, who never had meant to, the totally out of the question. Men who couldn't afford to dress her, "even to buy her boots," someone had said. Foreigners who had not heard, or who hearing didn't care because they didn't belong to London; but who thought her "exquise," "un reve"; a few boys who heard no gossip; a few old men, whom she interested more than ever on account of the gossip, a few married men, who either didn't mind if their wives were jealous, or who wanted to make them jealous, or to console themselves; artists, who had painted her, or wanted to. On the matrimonial horizon there was no one now; and her mother, with her usual want of savoir faire, with her horribly inartistic frankness, which was brutal, when she addressed her daughter directly, repeated the old counsel:

"I really think you might do worse than marry Hugh Glover." Notwithstanding all that had happened, it seemed the only thing to do now.

But even Lady Glaucourt herself, had been surprised at Judith's ready resurrection. Her ability, that was what she could not understand, what she admired, her ability, to face the music, to appear once more on the battlefield on which her hopes had so hopelessly fallen, and from which she had seen so many of the wounded retire before complete defeat overtook them, before they were captured prisoners.

But Judith would never marry Hugh Glover, never; rather, she would have killed him if she could. Yes, beneath all the humiliation, the horror, the disappointment, the sense of renewed defeat, weakening her courage, her purpose, there was one joy left, which was fierce, acrid-sweet, the joy that Hugh Glover had gone under, been exposed. Yes, to her it seemed to emphasize that he had gone under, the fact that the day his bankruptcy had appeared in the papers, he had written, after all that had happened, to tell her that if she would send him a hundred pounds, he thought he could arrange it all with Danvers. "Arrange it all with Danvers." The letter had actually made her smile—it was so "naif."

But how much she could see now, the seeing of which embittered all the horror of her position. That night when he had threatened, she could have kept him quiet by offering him money. She ought to have kept herself in hand. Yes, Frewley had been right when he said to her not to take that brandy and soda. She had not in any sense not been sober, but it had excited her, and she had given way to the expression of her loathing. Oh, how rotten, how rotten her life become, how one thing after the other seemed to conspire to make it worse and worse, and as if they were the halting places of an 'etape,' she could mark the three great transitions, the three great transitions her character had gone through, in proportion to which even the "malheur" seemed to have lost its primary and colossal significance.

There had been her love for Sir Hubert, when she had still possessed streaks, as it were, of holiness, patches of sublimity, which a gentle, forgiving hand might have drawn together into one beatific covering; when, from gratitude, from sheer love, from renovation of self-respect, from trust in the future, she might have grown good. Then the second time when, after being left, awful in her callousness, in her intent to filch from life what remained, and to jealously guard her secret, come what may, she still would have been thankful to the goods, and been a faithful, or at least a careful wife.

And now, when her very soul was arraigned against heaven and earth, when there seemed nothing left but hate in her heart, hate for George Danvers, and his stately desertion, hate for Hugh Glover, hate for the women who scoffed, and the men who preyed, hate for the treachery, the want of loyalty, the want of manly succour, the want of tenderness, hate because her child had been taken away, who one day, when the years had come and gone, and left her loveless and alone, might have proved a solace, an expiation, hate for her mother, who so helped the bleeding of the daily wound, and did nothing to bind, yes, and almost hate of her father, who coming and going daily could not read upon her face the imprints of her soul's despair.

If once she had been a sullied Lady Judith, an awful calculating Lady Judith, designing, reticent, cold, now she became a wicked Lady Judith, seeking whom she might devour, regardless. Yes, it was a wonder, even to herself, that she had the courage to face the London world again, the London world, which always knows the worst so accurately, and pays no heed to the redeeming features, the extenuating circumstances, doesn't want to heed them, for fear it should be asked to pity or console. She alone knew that it was her mission still to outwit the world, to force it to make obeisance, if not with goodness or position or tact or beauty, then with wealth, wealth on such a scale that she could buy the hearts of men and the respect of women, even if afterwards she tossed them aside. Yes, she promised herself no little pleasure from tossing them aside. She had grown cruel, Lady Judith, cruel as a mother who has killed her child, and who knows that if that tie did not deter her, there is no reason why she should not kill anyone else who crosses her path; cruel, calculating, watching every move on the board of life's game with shrewd, calm eyes, believing in nothing, clinging no more to those shreds of superstitious dread, which take the place of the divine in the hearts of the most hardened; believing in nothing, or believing, openly declaring herself on the side of the devil, who alone seemed to care for her welfare, and with the growing hatred, the growing hardening, the certainty, as if some denizen of hell had told her, that she could defy the decrees of life and death, that she would succeed, that the justice which she disbelieved in was yet somewhere, and that she would one day wield it to her own purposes.

What good could it do, her mother asked herself, coming to London, reviving the whole story? She had hoped, Lady Glaucourt, that now she would really go in for art seriously. She even suggested that till things had quieted down, she should go somewhere for a few months with Madame Dufour, travel, go round the world, or to Japan. Frewley had even offered to go with her. He was sorry for her, without knowing the full extent to which she needed pity. That fearful night, on which she had appealed to him, had brought out what was best in him, and since he had taken himself to task for not having looked after her better. There had even been a touching episode between them in which she had said:

"Somehow Frew, I don't know how it is, but I don't seem to have had a chance. Somehow one can't talk to mother about anything, and—" Yes, with all her beauty it seemed to Frewley as if something had been missing that would have helped her not to go the pace so much. But even he did not know quite how fast the pace had been at one time. For she had told him an untruth that night, and although he knew that it was an untruth, he thought that under the circumstances it was excusable, and he didn't want to know the truth.

But Lady Judith had no intention of going abroad, nor of disappearing. On the contrary, this time she was going to manage her affairs a great deal better. With grim humor, she told herself that she had had enough experience to do so.

That awful night had been one of the revelations which the fates offered her as an education. Instead of showering her with gifts, they had taught her how to weave her own destiny now, and she was going to weave it.

It might be this year, next year, not for several years, but she thought that it would come quickly, because she was moving so cleverly along the line, working another set to that which she had hitherto worked in, limiting her ambition, the while she widened it, spreading it out, making the basis of it firm. This time she would have no revelations, no surprises, because she would fight in the open, place herself beyond the possibility of reproach. It was a daring scheme, and one she never spoke of. When her mother asked her, with a species of despair, what she intended to do, she would laugh and say:

"There doesn't seem to be anything to do, does there, mother?" And her mother began to wonder whether she was quite, quite sane. She wished that she wasn't, that she would show more decisive signs of dementia, for then she could be spirited away. If there was one woman in the world to whom it was the bitterest trial of all to have a daughter of nearly twenty-five on her hands, it was Lady Glaucourt. She had accepted the burden of one or two seasons, almost as a concession, wrung from her by motherhood and marriage, but she had never bargained for seven successive seasons, never, and really, next season, she meant to go her own way and let Judith go hers. She really was quite convinced that so far Judith had not gone hers, except perhaps that once. And she recognized all the difficulties now.

And lately, Lady Judith had even wondered how she could ever have been so foolish as to allow any engagement to take place without having first squared that brute, Hugh Glover. Of course she ought to have known that he wasn't a gentleman, and she ought to have seen that he was somehow expunged from her circle. Now, although she knew that he had less power, she still thought that it was quite likely that he was telling everybody. George Danvers wouldn't, that she knew, for all the treachery she had met with, all the unkindness, the quick reaping of the whirlwind, she yet could still discriminate. It was on this discrimination that she counted. It was no longer a case of finding a man, who wouldn't speak, now it was a question of finding a man, who, if he found out, wouldn't care, or could not retaliate. She would find him, she told herself. That night, that awful night at Glaycourt, which for ever seemed associated in her mind with moonlight and a grinning faun, and fairy diaphanous drops of water, mocking her purity was the last of real pain, of horror, of humiliation, she would ever feel.

Yet, for all that, how the scene came over her sometimes, and, because she had not seen the expression on his face, she would try and picture to herself what George Danvers looked like when he overheard Hugh Glover's words. Frewley had told her how well he had behaved. Her brother—yes, that comfort at least she had, that the men who belonged to her, to whom she belonged, were gentlemen. The awful, awful feeling was that now she would perhaps have to enter the ranks of those who were not quite, the parvenu, the manufacturer, the self-made man. She did not know, poor Lady Judith, that those were the men from whom she could expect the most gentleman-like treatment, as society is now. If she had realized it perhaps she would have undertaken her present crusade in a gentler spirit, fraught with less scorn.

Yes, her brother had behaved well, and Danvers had done all that was possible, perhaps, where the one thing seemed impossible.

When the words uttered by Glover on the night air had reached them both, in a way which made it impossible to seem not to hear, or, by the furthest stretch of the imagination, not to understand, them, both men had halted for a second, but only a moment, both instinctively averting the danger of hearing what came next by quickness of decision. Frewley threw away his cigarette, and Danvers, turning to him, said with suppressed agitation:

"Apparently we are interrupting a serious conversation," and turning on his heel went back towards the house.

Frewley did not follow him. It was only right that Judith should know what had been overheard, and, besides, from Glover's tone, he fancied that the man was annoying her. He pushed his way towards the fountain.

"What on earth can she be thinking about, to come here this last night, at this hour and with that man?" He realized vaguely that it was all over between his sister and Danvers, and he blamed himself for it; what on earth had possessed him to bring Glover with him?

"I came to fetch you," he told his sister. "I don't think you know how late it is, and . . ."

"Oh, Robin . . ." Judith stretched her two hands toward him, with something like piteous entreaty in her face, which was so unlike her, that Frewley cast a look of anger at Glover, who stooped to pick up something, something which didn't exist merely to gain time.

"I'm coming, Frew." She cast one hurried glance at the figure of the man and walked away with her brother. As they hurried along through the dark pathways, deserted now by the soft moonlight, they could hear the man they had left behind, whistling softly to himself. What he was wondering was whether he had won or lost.

"I suppose you know that Danvers was with me just now, and that we overheard something of what that brute said." Frewley spoke surlily. What on earth had induced her to come out and speak to the man?

"Oh, dear, dear!" Judith moaned; there is no other word with which to describe the way she said: "Oh, dear, dear!"

It was a cry as of physical pain, and yet it voiced the coming to pass of something which she had known must come.

He told her exactly what they had overheard; and as they hurried back to the house, Judith turned the words round and round in her mind, wondering if there was any interpretation she could put upon them which would satisfy him, the man she was engaged to. No, she didn't see how she could explain them away. If they had only heard him say the first part of the sentence: "You will have to marry me," she could have put it down to the insistence of a fervent love, but "When that fellow Danvers knows—"

When they were close to the house, she made her brother repeat them.

"You are sure that those were the exact words?"

"Quite sure."

No, those she could never explain. She might perhaps with another kind of man, have invented a story of having flirted with this man Glover, but he would want to know everything, he would want an explanation, an explanation such, as later when he was minister somewhere, he would demand of another power which had slighted the prestige of Great Britain.

She would have to explain it lucidly, coherently, and she could not. Some months ago perhaps she would have had sufficient vitality to invent a plausible tale, but to-night she was conscious that she was mentally, if not physically weaker than she had been before her interview with Hubert Gresham. Now to-night, after her conversation with Glover, she was dazed, stunned. She could not find words in which to explain.

And as she neared the house, she wondered if he would be waiting for her, and she told her brother that she could not see him, not to-night.

"You had far better see him now," her brother told her, "he's disappointed, don't you know, his last evening, and then sending him to play billiards—what on earth . . .?"

"Oh, don't don't," Judith pleaded piteously. It was no good asking her what had possessed her. It was her evil genius, the ill-luck which seemed to pursue her always, always. Now she saw, as all the humans do in good time, that nothing that they can do avails, that the twists of fate are beyond the most potent machinations and designs of men, that for all the good she had done she might as well have left Danvers and Glover to themselves, for, as surely as if it were written across the sky, she felt that everything had come to an end. She could never explain, never, and if she did, at any moment Glover might tell, even now, in a few moments they might be talking together. In her confusion of thought, in her dazed state of mind, she forgot, having just come from an interview with a man lost to all sense of honor, that all men were not like Glover, that with Danvers she was dealing with a gentleman, who would take no word but her own.

But when they returned to the house, Danvers was not waiting for them. Something, he could not have told what, held him back from seeing her till she sent for him. And more than that he wanted to think. What he had heard would not have affected him so much if it had not come on the top of a certain sense, almost of discomfort, which had pervaded his whole engagement to her.

He had never, he told himself, felt quite certain of her, never been quite sure that she cared for him deeply; there had always been reserves, barriers on her side, which he had found it difficult to surmount, to overcome, which he had never been quite sure that he had broken down, had surmounted, and now the explanation seemed to lie in those words:

"When that fellow Danvers knows."

As yet, he thought only that it meant that she had been engaged to him, Hugh Glover, but even that fact disturbed him, because she had told him that she had never been engaged.

The fact that she seemed to have told him an untruth, troubled him, the fact that in her past lay little episodes which she had not confided to him. Yet still, he wanted to trust her.

It was past one o'clock when he had left the rhododendron walk; it was three when he went to bed, and no word had come from her that she wished to see him, and this was his last night. It must mean that she intended to throw him over. In the morning his valet came to awaken him for the early train, but he told him that he would not go till eleven. The carriage which rolled away soon after seven, carried Hugh Glover alone, Hugh Glover who thought it was not better to see any of them again just now, and who had thought to travel up to town with Danvers.

At breakfast, Judith did not appear, and her silence held in it something ominous for George Danvers.

After breakfast, he sat down and wrote her a letter. He had hoped to see her before he left, and hoped to hear from her own lips what those words had meant. He repeated them over again. He was certain that he could have faith in her, but surely they must have an interview. If she had been mistaken in thinking that she cared for him, well—she must give him up. He must leave now in half an hour. Would she not come down and see him and tell him frankly what it was all about?

When the maid brought the letter to her mistress's room, Judith, who had not slept all night, had just fallen asleep. The maid laid the letter by her bedside, and went away.

When she awoke, it was the sound of carriage wheels on the avenue, which awakened her, the carriage wheels which bore away George Danvers. He had waited till the last moment, but she had given no sign. In her silence, it seemed to him, lay her answer.

And when she awoke, Judith knew that it was a fate, a dismal Kismet she dared not withstand, that it would be no good now to call him back. She did not write. She did not explain. She could not.

(To be continued.)

"FROM THE RANKS."

Officers Who Started Their Military Career as Privates.

That it is quite possible for a private to rise, step by step, through the British Army, to the rank of General, we are reminded by the news of the recent death of Sir Luke O'Connor, who was one of the earliest rankers to do this.

He enlisted in one of the Welsh regiments when a young man, went through the Crimean War, was given a commission for signal bravery and ability, made a great name for himself when he was awarded the newly-created V.C. for saving the colors in action, and then rose, until at length his career was crowned by his being made a full general and a knight.

But Luke O'Connor was not actually the first of these noted rankers who rose to be celebrated generals. Probably Sir John Elley could claim that distinction.

John Elley entered the Army by enlisting as a private in the Horse Guards, and he so won the confidence and commendation of his superiors that he was given a commission. In the end he became a "Sir," and a full general.

The Duke of Wellington looked on Elley as one of his cleverest and most reliable men. Indeed, at Waterloo few of our leaders were so much trusted and consulted by Wellington as was General Elley.

Then we might mention Joseph Brome, who came into the Army as a little drummer-boy. He fought so well in battle, and displayed such early evidence of precocity as a soldier and leader, that he was given a lieutenancy, rose quickly to higher posts, and ended his military career by becoming a lieutenant-general.

Joseph Brome founded quite a family of great soldiers, for since his death both his son and his grandson have become generals.

In our own days we had General Hector Macdonald, whose tragic career is too well known to need revision. Enough to mention here that Macdonald entered a Highland regiment, showed himself so brave and able in battle that, when offered the choice of a V.C. or a commission, he chose the latter, and then rose quickly to the heights he attained during the South African campaign.

Also we must not forget William McBean, perhaps the greatest rival "Micky" O'Leary has had amongst soldiers of past days as the "one-man attacker" of an army. At Lucknow McBean, with his own hand, killed eleven of the mutineers in single combat. After receiving a commission in due course he was promoted till he at last found himself General W. McBean.

It is characteristic of the cool way he had of looking at things that, in response to the congratulations of his captain at his feat just described, he answered:

"Tut, tut, sir! Why, the whole job didna tak' me twenty meenits!"

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