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2	Oakville	R. Balmer	6	3	5	3	11	3	10 a.m.
3	Georgetown	L. Grant	12	16	11	7	17	9	9.30 a.m
	Acton	J. Matthews	13	11	13	8	16	11	10 a.m.
	Campbellville	S. R. Lister	11	8	10	0	9	8	9 30 "
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So she stood—her heart drinking in the words of the tempter as her mother's had done before her—and yet her whole soul going out to him, her whole life crying out to her:

"Take him—take him. All for love and let pride be put away."

Love him—yes. In that moment she knew it—knew that life held nothing where he was not—for he was royal monarch over all her heart.

"Will you not answer me, sweet?" broke out my lord afresh, clinging to her and trembling before the tempest of his passion. "Oh, love, save me from misery, lift me from despair. Look at me, dear, and tell me your heart went out to mine, as mine to yours, that night when first we met; tell me you love me, dear—tell me you will be my wife. Oh, how can I live without you?"

She never answered. White and still she stood and listened, for the devil talked still to her proud young heart.

"Look at me, love, and speak," my lord cried out, in a voice she never forgot. "I am offering you an honorable name, dear heart; I am offering you a strong, earnest, unwavering love—I am putting my life into your hands. Ah, sweet, have pity and do not blast it. Oh, my love, my love, I *love* you so. Look at me, Isabel—turn your dear eyes to my face and say: 'Lionel, I love you; I will be your wife.' Nay, do not fear; only God hears us, and God *knows* our hearts already. Look at me, love—I want to read those sweet eyes while you answer."

They went to his face at his command—had she been marble she could not have prevented, that—and looking down into their dark depths, he held both her hands and drew her softly to him.

"Sweet, do you hear me?" he said, softly. "I love you, Isabel—will you be my wife?"

For a second she swayed between love and pride, for a second she wavered, but for a second only.

The soft light went out of her eyes, the cold pride froze over her face—she looked at him, drew her hands from his, and answered simply:

"*No!*"

He reeled back from her with the cry of a heart trampled, the moan of a life wrecked, and in the sitting moonlight, she saw the awful look of a man's despair pass over his bonny blonde face.

"Isabel!" he cried out, huskily. "Oh, my love, my love, will you kill him? I am laying my life at your feet, and——"

"And I decline it with thanks, Lord Beresford," she interrupted, coldly. "Go to your proud mother and tell her what the 'country solicitor's daughter' has said. Tell her that her pampered darling has offered this 'untitled nobody' the whole heritage of Ravenswood, but tell her that she does not love him, and he has been—rejected. Even the Earl of Beresford, my lord, may presume too much, and you can tell the countess that."

It was over. He had spoken and been answered, and pride had won the day. Her own lips had proclaimed it, her own lips had told him that she did not love him, and Lionel, Lord Beresford, would never accept an unloving bride.

So, for a moment they stood, she cold, and pale, and stately in her imperial pride, he, with man's utmost woe upon his face—a stark, white figure under the moonlight and the stars—his whole life emptyy, his future a waste, his heart rejected, and all for a woman's pride.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CHANGED HEART.

In all his life, Lionel Lord Beresford, never suffered as he suffered at that moment. An avalanche of utter despair seemed to descend upon his heart; a mountain's terrible weight seemed to fall suddenly upon his bright young manhood, crushing all that was beautiful, shattering all that was sweet and tender, and making the whole wide world a dreary waste, in which he had neither aim nor purpose.

He leaned against a great stone vase and looked at Isabel where she stood, the moonlight shining down through the trees and sifting impalpable silver about her, her glorious dark head held haughtily erect, her sweet face as white and cold as the pearls that glimmered on the satin sheen of her costly robe, and her sparkling fingers tightly shut on the gemmed sticks of her perfumed fan.

After her cold rejection and that bitter, taunting speech she had spoken when he had laid his proud young heart at her feet, there had been not one word exchanged between them—white and still they stood and looked at each other, and the wind, floating over the tropical bloom of the palace gardens, bore the faint, sweet echo of the band to their ears.

My lord stood awhile and tried to live down that desolate, heart-hungry feeling; tried to fight with his misery and overcome his terrible despair, but the seed was too deeply rooted, and he could only turn aside and cover his face, with the cry of a strong man's anguish.

"You do not mean it, Isabel—you cannot mean it!" he broke out, suddenly, turning again and lifting those bonny azure eyes to her face. "Ah! sweet, I have loved you so! Surely you will not put me from you without a tender word? You *must* have some tender feeling toward me—love like mine can never live unrequited. I have read the truth in your face, my darling. I have read love in those sweet dark eyes, and—and you are only trying to test me—you are only jesting because I frightened you so. Ah, love, do not sport with me longer. I am suffering. Isabel—cease to trifle with me, dear, and speak the truth. My arms are open to you, sweet—come to me and rest your dear head upon my bosom; come to me, my darling, and say, 'Lionel, I love you.'"

He took a step forward as he spoke, and held his arms wide.

"Come to me, love—I have dreamed so often of the picture—come to me, Isabel, and lay your head against my heart."

Ah, Heaven, how she longed to do it. He was looking straight at her, his soul shining out of his blue eyes, his face radiant in the mystical moonlight, so handsome, so noble, so true, that for a moment she wavered.

But for a moment only. The softening light went out of her eyes and face, the treacherous quiver stilled itself upon her sweet lips—she thought of that proud old mother who had stung her so, she thought of the task she had set herself, and then—she was ice again.

"Do not deceive yourself, Lord Beresford," she said, coldly. "The picture you have dreamed can never be realized."

"Isabel!"

"I mean it, my lord. We can be nothing to each other—less than nothing; after to-night, let us meet no more. Nay, hear me out. For your own sake, a marriage between you and me can never be dreamed of; and if you ask it again, if you force your presence upon me, I shall seek shelter in flight. A tender word—a tender thought, even—for the Countess of Beresford's son is something I have forbidden myself to have. Go to your lady-mother—go to her, my lord, and tell her what the country solicitor's daughter has said. If you plead for an hour, it would be the same. I am the granddaughter of one Lord Mount Severn, the grandniece of another—go to the Countess of Beresford, my lord, and tell her that her race is not ancient enough to mingle and mate with mine. Pray return to the drawing-room. Your path lies that way, I think. Our interview is over, my lord."

She made a stately bow as she ceased speaking, and swept by him to the edge of a great stone fount. A queen could have been no prouder, an empress could have dismissed him no colder, no statelier, no more dignified; and yet she loved him, she always would love him, and standing there by the brink of the moonlit fountain, she knew it as surely as she ever would.

For one moment he stood like a statue—his lips shut, his face ghastly—then, with a bitter moan, he turned and walked away. He did not speak, he did not cry out again. The lords of Beresford had gone to death, many a time, with head uplifted—he would bear his pain and meet his doom as others of his race had borne and met theirs. He loved her and he had lost her—no matter, he was a Beresford; she had dismissed him, and though he dropped dead in his tracks, he would go.

There was no word of parting. Standing by the fountain and looking back she saw him stagger a little, as though something too heavy to bear had been laid upon his shoulders, then with a great effort, he recovered himself; the outstretched arms drooped, the drooping head lifted—he paused a moment as though to gather strength, and then, all white and still, she saw him walk away.

It was all over. A bend in the pathway hid him suddenly from sight, the echoing footsteps passed on and were drowned in the faint throbbing of the music. She stood a moment, cold and still and frightened, and then slowly, as though the earth were slipping away from her, she sat down on the marble steps of the fountain and bowed her head in the moonlight.

"All over; oh Heaven, all over, and we have parted," she moaned in a faint, sick voice. "I have sent him away from me, I have let pride conquer love, and we have parted, parted, parted. Oh, what have I done? What is there left for me when he has passed out of my life? God help and pity me—I have lost my darling, I have sent him from me, and oh, I love him so—I love him so."

It was not the haughty Isabel Carlyle who spoke those words, it was a miserable creature who knelt by the fountain's brink and clasped her face between her ice-cold hands—a wretched woman bowed to earth by pride—a hopeless being who was little enough like the stately lady who stood there one moment since, and sent her darling from her.

The glimmering satin robe was crushed beneath her, the linked pearls had snapped their silken ropes and lay about her like crystallized tears; the dripping fountain showered its silvery spray over her, the moonlight sifted down and drenched the sleeping earth, but she lay face downward on the marble steps and thought of nothing, realized nothing save that life was empty and her own pride had wrecked her.

"Miserable wretch! miserable wretch!" she broke out in a storm of grief. "Oh, that I could stand and see him suffer—to think that I could wreck his life and mine, and all to wound his mother, all to crush her pride. And he is gone—my darling is gone. I have forbidden him to look on my face again, and all for pride, oh Heaven, all for pride. No, I know it now—I cannot live without him, I cannot drive him from me. Oh, Lionel, Lionel, my darling, come back, come back, I love you."

She had half risen while speaking, and throwing out both arms as she pronounced those final words, she started forward and lifted her dead white face.

"Lionel, come back to me—I love you my darling!" she moaned with all the passionate pathos of an empty heart. "I have repented, love. Come back to me, Lionel—I cannot live without you."

So, for one brief moment she sat—her arms extended, her sweet face drawn and white and anguished in the moonlight, and her eyes looking blankly down on the spot where my lord had stood.

It was empty now; there was no white face to meet hers, no willing arms extended, no drooping figure by the "trailing tropical splendor" of the great rose. The moon still penciled its arabesque of fairy silver on the shadowed pathway, the wind still played over the roses and bore the faint throb of the music on its scented wings, but my lord was gone; the spot was empty; she sat by the fountain alone.

She dragged herself to her feet, faint and dizzy with pain, and crawled over to the great stone vase.

"He stood here—my darling," she murmured, bending over and pressing her lips to the earth, where his feet had rested; "he stood here and I sent him from me; I was mad enough to wreck my own worthless life, cruel enough to torture his noble heart. Oh, that picture, shall I ever sleep and not see it, I wonder? shall I ever forget you, my darling, as you stood here and took your doom from my pitiless hands? Oh, my love, my love, come back to me. Pride is past—I know it now; I cannot live without you. Come back to me, Lionel, I love you, dear, I love you."

She bent lower over the mark of his footsteps and laid her dry cold face upon it.

"Do you know—do you realize?" she murmured, in a wistful, plaintive way. "I love you, Lionel—oh, please come back. Say you forgive me, Lionel; say you forgive me, dear. I am kissing the earth your dear feet have trod, I am saying adieu to all the earth holds dear. Ah, love, I was cruel—come back; I love you so. Open your arms to me and say 'Isabel, come,' once more. I will not refuse, dear—I was mad when I did. I love you, Lionel; the world holds nothing else but you."

The strained, choked voice broke down suddenly; she knelt a moment in perfect silence, and then something dark came out of the shadow and walked over into the moonlight.

"Isabel, come."

That was all. She started with a low, faint cry of peace and looked upward with a thrice transfigured face.

My lord stood there as of yore, only that there was no anguish in his bonny azure eyes—his arms open, his handsome blonde face uplifted in the moonlight.

"Isabel, come," he said, with a tender smile. "Come to me, my beautiful proud darling, and realize the picture I have dreamed."

For one moment it seemed as though the earth stood still; the next, she was on his bosom and his arms were wrapped about her.

"Oh, love, how could you be so cruel?" he murmured, bending his head and kissing her. "Think—if I had gone away. Ah, sweet, I was near you when you called. I sank upon the seat at the bend of the path, and there your dear voice came to me. Oh, love, if I had gone what would our lives be worth to-night?"

She shuddered in his arms and her dark eyes grew wide and solemn.

"Don't, don't," she muttered faintly. "I dare not think of it. If you had left me, my lord——"

"Nay, not that," he interrupted. "Not my lord' *now*, Isabel. After this—Lionel."

"Lionel, then, but my lord all the same," she answered sweetly, twining her arms about his neck and looking up into his face. "Oh, love, save me from myself. Never let pride come between us again, Lionel."

"It never shall," he answered, solemnly. "The future shall hold nothing but love, Isabel—nothing but love and peace."

And in the terrible after-days, when the shadow of a great sin lay between them, Lionel, Lord Beresford, asked himself how he had kept that promise.

"I heard you talking beside the fountain, dear," he added, tenderly, "and I know now how nearly my mother's pride came to be wrecking our lives. But forget it all, Isabel. When you are Countess of Beresford, my mother will remove to Crown Leighton and yours shall be the only rule at Ravenswood."

He looked down into her fair sweet face, expecting to see it light with pleasure, but a solemn expression had come over it and her dark eyes met his half wistfully.

"Lionel," she said, solemnly—"Lionel, let us not only forget, but forgive. Once I thought of wedding you and striking back your mother's pride so, but——but I think when I came so near losing you forever that Heaven has shown me the folly of pride. Your mother loves you dearly, she is solicitous only for your welfare, and her heart is linked to her old ancestral home. I have not been blameless, dear, and let me atone for the bitter words I have spoken so often. Will you be angry if I ask you a favor? Let your mother live on with us at Ravenswood Court; let her retain her old position and do not rob her of the glory she has held so long. It is only customary, Lionel, for the dowager Lady Beresford to retire to the jointure house at Crown Leighton. Let your mother be an exception to the rule, let me learn to love her and try to make her love me, and give her two children instead of one. You will not mind that I ask you this, will you, Lionel?"

"I shall love you and prize you more than ever," he answered, drawing her nearer and kissing her grave, sweet face. "She is my mother, Isabel, and I have never known anything but the truest devotion from her. The young countesses of Beresford have only been too eager to rule and reign alone. It will be a new honor for Ravenswood to have a countess such as you, sweet."

"And you will ask Lady Beresford to remain, Lionel? You will tell her I want to win her love because—because she is your mother, Lionel?"

"Your will shall be my law," he murmured, leading her off through the shadowy trees. "Ah, Isabel, when I cease to love you, I pray Heaven I may die. The world holds nothing but you—my life is in your hands."

They had walked out of the shaded path, and stood again in the broad avenues where the moon was shining and the arches of lights led up to the palace steps.

She paused suddenly and looked up into his bonny blue eyes.

"Oh, Lionel, always love me," she said, solemnly. "If I lost your love, all the world would be a wilderness and I should only want to die."

And my lord always liked to remember her as she looked when she said those words—the white September moon shining down on "gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls," and the arches of lights sparkling like bowers of jewels above and about her, as though a rainbow halo shone over her beautiful head.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW THEY PARTED.

My lord drew her arm through his and led her up the broad stone steps to the beautiful moonlighted plaza where vases of trailing bloom wrapped the marble balustrade in a mantle of vivid color and tinted lamps burned like violet stars in the green dusk of the leaves.

"Wait here, my darling," he murmured, leading her over to a secluded seat and looking down into her beautiful, happy face; "wait here, Isabel, and I will go in search of your mother. Better she should know the truth at once, dear; better that all should be over, and the world free to know what the future promises when we go back to the royal presence."

He bent and kissed her tenderly, and with a smile turned and walked back to the royal drawing-room.

"How noble he is, how handsome, how kingly," murmured Isabel, watching him as he passed through the crystal door of the conservatory and strode back to the glittering *salon*. "Ah, Lord, I am not worthy such devotion, I fear. I am not worthy such happiness as this. I have been arrogant, sinful, wicked, but if love can atone for the folly, pride shall never darken my life again. My life shall know no crown but your love, Lionel, my heart shall know no worship than is not wholly yours."

She rose from her secluded seat and walked over to the vase-crowned balustrade. The plaza was quiet deserted, no presence marred the glorious solitude but her own, and leaning over she laid her locked hands on the broad stone coping and looked up at the starry night sky.

The music of the band floated dimly to her ears, the perfume of the flowers filled the night with incense, the moon looked down in silver silence on the wondrous beauty of the palace gardens, and standing there she built a thousand aerial castles, dreamed a thousand happy dreams of the future by her darling's side.

She had not noticed the soft *frou-frou* of a woman's robe, she had not heard the firm tread of a man's foot on the tesselated marble—she was absorbed in her blissful reverie, and she never realized another presence until my lord's voice broke the spell.

"The chair is empty—she must have wandered off," he was saying: "but never mind mother, I can tell you all the same."

"Lionel, pray be less mysterious. Who may *she* mean, and what is the motive in leading me out of her majesty's presence in this unceremonious style?" broke in Lady Beresford, pettishly. "I much prefer the drawing room to this romantic spot. Pray say what you have to, and allow me to return. Sir John Trevoyle will deem it anything but good breeding to lead me away in the midst of a discussion."

"Sir John Trevoyle may deem it what he chooses," responded my lord, gravely. "I owe a duty to you and to Isabel, mother mine, and I wish to perform it immediately. Pray be seated and let me tell you all."

A duty to Isabel. At the mention of that my lady's proud old face paled in the moonlight, a vague presentiment chilled her heart, a dim suspicion of the truth froze itself upon her brain, and she drew herself erect with a frigid dignity.

"I—I prefer to stand, Lord Beresford," she said, in a smothered voice, putting one starry hand to her throat and looking straight at him. "Women of my race have faced death and never quailed, my lord. I—I can stand and meet mine, I fancy. Go on—let us have the tragedy over, for it *is* to be a tragedy, I foresee. Pray speak, Lord Beresford. I am in haste to return, and—and it is of a marriage you wish to speak, is it not?"

She was looking straight at him, all her mother-love fighting hard with pride and prejudice, and all the dead ashes of her hopes lying heavily about her heart.

"Go on, my lord," she said in a voice that was strangely calm. "It is of a love story, of a proposed union you desire to speak, is it not?"

"It is of a proposed union—yes, mother," he replied. "But pray be seated, I——"

"I prefer to stand, I have said," she broke in, hastily. "Oh that terrible music—I wish it would cease. Let us have the interview over, my lord. It sickens me to stand here. And of this proposed union?"

"My heart and life are wrapped up in it, mother. Over all the world I have won my darling's heart."

"Pray do not rhapsodize, my lord. "Let us be very concise—I am in haste to return. So you love and are loved in return?"

"I love and am loved in return—yes."

"The wedding will assuredly be, then?"

"Assuredly," with conviction. "My life's hope is set upon it, mother."

"And the bride? Let us hasten, my lord; the odor of these flowers sickens me. The bride who is to take my place at Ravenswood Court, the woman who is to be the future Countess of Beresford——"

"Is Isabel Carlyle, mother—you must have known it could be no other," he answered tenderly.

My lady did not start, did not turn paler. She met that blow with all the icy calmness of a Beresford—her lips tightened a little, her eyes glittered a trifle more coldly, but beyond that there was no sign of emotion, nothing to tell him that life, for that proud old mother, held not one hope, one joy, one spark of happiness. She laid down her crown as women of her race had laid down their heads before now, and never the headsman's ax did more deadly work than the words my lord spoke at that moment.

The music throbbed and surged through her reeling brain, the flowers sickened her with their odorous breath, the garish moonlight seemed to burn her eyes—she drew in a breath that was half a sigh, and then spoke.

"Go on," she said, huskily, letting her jeweled hands drop, and standing before him in all the dull apathy of hopeless life. "My purples are resigned, my crown is removed. Kill me, Lord Lionel Beresford, but not with torture."

He made a step forward and put out his hand.

"Mother!" he gasped, "mother, I——

"Go on, my lord."

"Mother, I love Isabel Carlyle."

"Go on."

"Will you not try to love her too? Will you not soften your heart to her as hers has softened to you? Ah, mother mine, you do not know how good Heaven has been to me; you do not realize how spotless is the heart I have won," my lord went on rapturously. "Ah, let pride no longer shadow your heart. Be my mother as of yore, bear with my love as you bore with my childish fancies, and smile as you used to when I came to you with my troubles as a boy."

"Go on."

"Mother, she would not rob you of your position; she would not deprive you of one honor you have held so long. Her own sweet lips begged that you might remain at Ravenswood, and out your days under our own ancestral roof. Her own sweet lips implored me to win to love you and you would reign over