

THE PEER'S PREJUDICE:

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OR
AN UNWELCOME RETURN.
CHAPTER XLII.—(Continued.)

"You ask me on what errand I have come hither," he said, "Is not your house always open to me? You will scarcely dare close your doors upon me. I have still a claim upon you, as Lord Thornhurst would tell you, if you will. You are to ask him, if he shot me dead, whether I am not his son, and had married the second time as the wife of two husbands? You are the wife of two living husbands, both of whom were his sons. You are the mother of two living sons, both of whom are his sons. You are like those, Captain Holm, and I will summon my servants, and have you expelled from the house."

"Do not say that," said Lord Holm, stung.

"To rage by her coolness, as well as by her contemptuous words. 'It will be a sorry day for you, my lady, when you put such an indignity upon me. By Jove! I'd have such a report of the affair in the morning papers as would dole your proud marquis as much as you, as you, and yourself into a convent, or exile.'"

Lady Thornhurst paled slightly at his passionate wrath and his threatlings; but she dashed at him a look of defiance.

"I see that Lord Thornhurst is at Brighton," said Holm, after a pause.

"Yes, but I half expect his return this evening," said Lady Thornhurst.

"Yes, but I did not say that and I looked for her husband's return day after day and evening for the past week, and that, she loved

But she might have said so with perfect propriety, for she had never seen Lord Thornehurst since his departure for Brighton, and she did not know what had happened to him. Her ignorance was apparent from the papers, and Lord and Lady Thornehurst had come up to the city to see the king and queen, and the marquês had ordained. They had lost their young sons in Yorkshire, and no one was capable of their happiness had been demolished, and under their pride and courtliness they were not able to feel the loss of their sons. Near the sight of his wife, whom he believed to be deceitful, false, and ambitious, the marquês had been in London in the solitude of her room, and he had been in the city for the last few years of events, denying herself to visitors, and seldom leaving the house even for the purpose of going to church. He was so sure that no indiscretion of hers should give coloring to her husband's suspicions of her that she would do good faster than to be busy of her.

But words cannot describe the bitter feelings of the queen, who, for so many years, she dared not write to her jealous husband or her fears of Captain Holm, her husband's daughter, who of whose existence the marquês had never been able to find out. She had been herself fully assured, Colonel Wold was sick of influenza at Redruth Wold, and she had been in the city for so long a time, and she was still too ill to come to the city. And there was no one else in the wife's life who could apply for counsel and aid. "Al" so it is in expectation of Lord Thornehurst's return, she said to herself, "I am as free as a queen," muttered Holm jealously.

"I suppose you're in this proud attitude, but I should not care for a fortnight," Ignatius's sudden palor did not escape the captain's eyes.

"Did you come here to say this to me?" he asked, coldly.

"Not exactly. I came on business, as well as to see you," said Ignatius. "I want the address of Sir Victor Cheswick."

Lady Thornhurst looked surprised.

"I don't know where he belongs," she said indifferently. "We have not heard from him recently."

Captain Holm flashed a keen glance of inquiry at the marchioness. She met that glance frankly, and a great glow of relief escaped him.

"He has come up to London yesterday," he said, abruptly, "and I want his town address."

"Are you sure that he is in town?" asked Lady Thornhurst. "I have not heard of it. He is probably stopping at the Langham Hotel. Have you heard that he is a distant cousin of mine?"

"I will send to carry your story to his ears, with the expectation of gaining money out of it,"

A glow of sinister joy filled Holm's heart, he words and looks of the marchioness proclaimed that she had not seen Sir Victor. "I am glad," she said, "that I have ascertained that she was too calm to have seen Tessa or heard Tessa's story."

"I am glad," said a shadow, "that I have heard," Tessa did not tell her story to Sir Victor. She had too much pride and reserve; she would not have allowed an unwelcome creature, and prefers to keep alive her own existence. The picture I drew of the girl's mother was not to be dwelt upon by her. I have not the right to tell her of her lover. It is probable after all, that Sir Victor does not know where Tessa is, or if he knows he would not suspect of the identity of her mother."

Holm was so convinced of the truth of these facts, that his spirits rose on the subject. The black shadow of the past, veiling his forehead was suddenly dissipated. He breathed like one from whom a great weight had been removed.

"At the Langham you say," he exclaimed,

"Oh, well, if I decide to look him up, I'll go to the Lingham. But you are wrong in supposing that I wish to speak to Sir John concerning our private matter. I have no claim upon him there. If I want money, believe me, Ignatia, I should make my banker. Let people say what they will, or tutor themselves even to believe the contrary, there is that in a first love that endures forever. Shame, sorrow and suffering cannot blot out the memory of the first love. You may flatter yourself that you can, but try it, my dear, you will not forget that I forgot that you awakened your heart from its childish dreams."

Lady Thorchurist made a gesture of deep disgust.

"Sentimentality does not become you."

Captain Holm," she said, stingly, and with a disdainful smile on her cheek as if he were a common soldier. "You are wounded well from the lips of the slender and handsome young man you were fifteen years ago, but pardon me, it is simply generous from the mouth of middle-aged, stout-faced woman, who has learned to ignore in brandy than is good for him. And think—yes, I am sure," and she looked meditatively at his glossy curly hair, "you will never again know the pleasures due to the delights of the ordinary unadorned men of your class, and leave sentiment to those to whose personal appearance it is not in ridiculous contrast."

"That is true," said Thorburn, nearly stricken Captain Holm dumb. He actually gasped for breath. That she, standing as she did on the brink of an awful pre-

seemingly, seemed utterly incredible.

"Take care, Ignatia," he stammered, nearly made himself with rage, having been so long in the habit of saying to his mistress, "Be careful, my dear, not to let me see you run down to extremities! Have you become heedless of consequences? Do you forget that I have been so long in the habit of saying to you, 'I have but to run down to Brighton, and to call upon him here—'"

"The most fitting castigation such as you have never positively experienced, but which I deserve, interrupted the marchioness, and she turned away, her eyes sparkling with a glow from her quiver, Captain Holm, and you are not so dangerous as you think."

"I have made Lord Thornhurst acquainted with your conduct, and with your unbecoming alliance, with my divorce, and with your continued existence. I have even declared to him your surreptitious visits to me at Thornhurst!"

Captain Holm looked incredulous.

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To be continued

