

A Convenient Engagement

Alton Court was very full. It was always looked on as one of the pleasantest country houses to visit, and very few invitations were ever refused. To-night there was a large dance going on, and people had come from all round about, and with the large house-party the ball-room was well filled.

Molly Clifford was perhaps the prettiest girl there, with her great dark eyes and fair fluffy hair, and her whole face radiant with youth and happiness.

Lewis Pleydell looked down on her admiringly as he led her away into the conservatory after the dance was over, and leant over her with a lover's devoted manner. "That was delightful!" he cried, as they sat down under a big palm, and he took her fan from her hand and fanned her, so that her golden curls fluttered over her white brow. "I wonder if you enjoyed that waltz one quarter as much as I did?"

Molly smiled dreamily. To her it had been heaven. She glanced up into his handsome face a little shyly.

"It was the best dance I have had to-night," she said.

"Was it really?" he cried delightedly. "Oh, Molly, you pretty child, how I love you! Did you know it? Did you realise, you little thief, how you have been stealing my heart away during these last ten days I have been at Alton Court?"

Molly looked down, her fair face covered with happy blushes. "No," she answered, in a low voice; "how should I?"

He shook his head at her reprovingly.

"You do not know your power yet," he said, and then he sighed. "In a few years' time you will understand and will wield it relentlessly. Your path will be strewn with broken hearts."

"If you mean I shall be a flirt you are quite mistaken!" cried Molly indignantly. "That I shall never be!"

"Won't you?"—tenderly. "Ah, if you only leave a corner of your heart for me I shall not complain. Molly, why should such lovely girls as you be sent on earth for man's destruction?"

"How foolish you are!" said Molly, laughing. "I begin to believe you are a flirt yourself, and you don't mean all you say."

He took her little hand in his and raised it to his lips. "You do not doubt that I love you?" he said reproachfully. "Do you, Molly dear?"

But before she could answer he had taken up his programme and glanced at it. He rose from his seat hastily.

"The next dance has begun some time," he said. "I did not notice the music."

She was disappointed, albeit that she knew her partner must have been looking for her. She rose from her seat too.

"What a pity it is that they have such short intervals!" she said. "Who are you dancing with?"

Did she have a lingering hope that he would cut it for her?

"My partner is Miss Wyndham," he answered rather anxiously, "and I expect she will be very cross with me for keeping her waiting. I forget time, you see—smiling—when I am with you."

And then he somewhat hurriedly took Miss Clifford back to the ball-room, and Molly smiled a little maliciously as she saw Miss Wyndham's sharp blue eyes watching the door, while an impatient expression was on her face.

After all, Lewis Pleydell had forgotten time for her sake. Lewis Pleydell loved her; nothing else in the world seemed of much consequence to Molly then.

She turned to Sir Daryl Harcourt as he came eagerly forward to claim her, and led him lead her into the maze of dancers.

"There is very little of the waltz left," he said reproachfully. "You came up very late. I was afraid you were going to cut my dance altogether."

Molly felt conscience-stricken, for she knew she would have done so if Lewis had asked her to do so.

"I am very sorry," she answered penit-

tently. "It is very difficult to hear the music in the conservatory. I did not know it had begun."

Sir Daryl smiled a little sadly. He and Molly had always been good friends; but he felt, with a pang, that she regarded him almost as belonging to a previous generation. And yet he was not very old—only thirty-seven; but somehow it seemed a gulf of many years to Molly.

He looked down now at her radiant face and sighed. Had he, after all, been mistaken in Pleydell's motives, and did he really mean to marry Molly, or was it merely a heartless flirtation? She looked so happy, he felt with a jealous pang that the fatal words had been spoken during that quarter of an hour in the conservatory.

He imagined her there listening with rapt attention to the words of love poured out by the man she loved. If it had only been his fortune to have such a gracious privilege. If he were only her lover!

He saw Molly's eyes wandering round the room when he stood for a minute or two to take breath, and then come to a full stop as Pleydell and his partner flashed by, Pleydell looking down tenderly and intently into Myra Wyndham's face, trying to bring back the smiles which had been chased away by his delay in claiming his dance.

Sir Daryl ground his teeth. How dare this man look so at another woman a few minutes after he had been, doubtless, making love to Miss Clifford!

He heard Molly catch her breath quickly, and the radiance die out of her face; but in another moment Pleydell danced past them again, and, glancing up suddenly, smiled affectionately at Molly, and the girl's spirits immediately came back and the colour returned to her cheeks.

Sir Daryl made an impatient movement, and then he turned impulsively to Molly.

"Miss Clifford," he said, "I want you to promise me something. I am years older than you." And his tone was tinged with regret. "I know the world: I know the many pitfalls that must come to one as one gets on in life. I want you to promise me that if you are ever in trouble, and if I can ever help you in any way, you will let me know. Will you?"

Molly laughed lightly. "Trouble seemed so far away now."

"I certainly will!" she said. "You are very kind to suggest my doing so. And then she shrugged her shoulders a little restlessly. "Don't let us think of trouble to-night," she said: "to-night of all nights in our lives. Sir Daryl, have you ever felt so happy as to imagine that there is no such place as earth—that it is, in fact, all heaven?"

Sir Daryl shook his head.

"No," he said simply, "I have not, and I am afraid I never shall now."

II.

It was the following afternoon, and the men were all out shooting, and most of the ladies were resting in their own rooms, for after dancing so vigorously the night before they did not care to exert themselves.

Molly Clifford stood gazing out of the library window, and Myra Wyndham, a few yards off, lay back among the cushions of her chair. Both the girls, being young, scorned the afternoon sleep that had been courted by their elders.

Molly was thinking, and her thoughts were pleasant ones, judging by the brightness of her eyes. She tapped the window-pane mechanically while she went over again the conversations which had passed between herself and Lewis Pleydell the previous evening.

He loved her! She felt sure he loved her. Had not his every action, his every look, his very tone told her so again and again? And if he had not said so in actual words that his one desire was to marry her, surely his manner had implied it quite sufficiently.

She was very happy and cheerful to-day, and could afford to laugh at her previous jealous fears of Miss

Wyndham. The latter was so rich, while Molly was so poor, and at times Miss Clifford had suspected and observed a certain tenderness in Myra's manner towards Lewis Pleydell. But what did it matter if her feelings were not reciprocated?

Miss Wyndham yawned and looked across at the girl by the window.

"I wish you would leave off tap-

ping, Miss Clifford," she said irritably; "the noise gets on my nerves."

Molly turned round her radiant face. "I am so sorry," she said. "Why did you not tell me before?"

Myra watched her through her half-closed eyes. "You look most amazingly fresh," she said. "Are you not at all tired after last night?"

FAC-SIMILE OF ROYAL TESTIMONIAL



ROYAL TESTIMONIAL I
ROYAL TESTIMONIAL I

Berlin
Alsenstrasse

Feb 25th 1896

"Koko" for the hair, is the best dressing I know. It keeps the head cool, promotes growth, and is in every way excellent.

Princess Holenke

KOKO FOR THE HAIR

Eradicates Scurf and Dandrif, Prevents Hair Falling, Promotes Growth, and its unique Testimonials prove it to be undoubtedly the Best Preparation for the Hair. Perfectly Harmless, Clean, Cool, & Invigorating. In 1/2, 1/4 & 1/8 ounce, of all Chemists, Stores &c. THE KOKO MANUFACTURING CO., LTD., 16, Bevis Marks, LONDON, ENG.

SOCIAL NEEDS.

Whatever questions of Social Needs may exist, and however much we may rack our brains to discover satisfactory solutions of them, there is at least one—and certainly not the least important—province in which the solution has been found. For is not the question "What is our best daily beverage?" of importance to all classes of society? And is any other answer to that question possible, from disinterested persons, than "Van Houten's Cocoa"? It is more wholesome than any other drink, it is nourishing and easy to digest; refreshing, without acting injuriously on the nervous system, in the way that Tea, Coffee, and other drinks do; and its delicious flavor in no way pulls on the taste after continually using the cocoa. As regards its price, it is, as thousands can testify from practical experience, not at all dear to use.

What a pity all social questions cannot be answered as easily as the above one; but their answers require a great deal of thinking about. Those who are busy thinking about them, cannot do better than take a cup of Van Houten's Cocoa daily, as for helping the brain-worker it is without equal.

HAVE YOU TRIED
VAN HOUTEN'S Eating CHOCOLATE P