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BEHIND MASKS

Adapted from the story "Jeane of the Marches" by E. Phillips Oppenheim
JUL 22 1921
Scenario by Katherine Sturges
Directed by David Greig

Starring Dorothy Dalton.

Jeanne Mesurier is an orphaned heiress. Her father, a Belgian financier, left her under the guardianship of a French Adventuress, Madam Delere, whose social pretensions had deceived him into believing her a fit person to watch over Jeanne. Jeanne is placed in a convent and stays there until a few months before the birthday on which, under her father's will, she is to inherit the estate. Then she is taken to London by Ena Delere who plans to marry her off, for a consideration, to Maurice Brensault, a fading beau with a flourishing fortune.

Ena Delere is maintaining a dubious position on the fringe of high society in company with Major Ferrest, whose position, however, is fast becoming untenable. The truth is that the two are gamblers and use a code of signals to rob their victims. Ena, a handsome woman, attracts the impressionable and wealthy young men about town and Ferrest, with her assistance cheats them at bridge.

Nigel Ferrest is aiding Ena to arrange a match between the old Frenchman, Maurice Brensault and the lovely and unsophisticated Jeanne. Ferrest and Ena owe money to Brensault who has agreed to cancel their debts and hand them ten thousand pounds if they will arrange the marriage which will give him possession of Jeanne -- and her fortune. What this fortune is nobody accurately knows except the solicitor in Paris who drew the will and has control of the estate.

Jeanne overhears Ena discussing the proposed marriage of convenience with Brensault. She refuses to meet Brensault, who warns Ena that she must either bring Jeanne to reason or else repay what she and Ferrest owe.

With Jeanne refusing to entertain any idea of marrying Brensault, the outlook for Ena and Ferrest is very gloomy. Ferrest tells Ena that the fellows at the club have refused to play with him any more, they suspect that his small but constant winnings are due to something else besides luck. Only one man seems to regard him without suspicion, a new member named Engelten, who is evidently wealthy and would make good plucking if a game could be arranged.

Ena has been flattered by the attentions of a young man from the counties. He is Cecil Bourne, younger of the two brothers who represent all that is left of a very historical family whose seat is at Westhaven, Sussex. Cecil has invited her and Ferrest to Westhaven Manor. She suggests to Nigel that they accept the invitation and take Engelten along. They will be able to get up a bridge game and trim both Cecil Bourne, and Engelten. Meanwhile they may be able to subdue Jeanne into a willingness to marry Brensault.

Ena, who has been using the authority given her as guardian under French laws to coerce Jeanne into obedience, now takes a different task. She tells Jeanne that she is very sorry to have quarrelled with her over Brensault, assures the girl that she wishes her well, and then announces that they are going to Westhaven, by the sea. Jeanne, who is in love with the seaside, is so overjoyed at the prospect of leaving London, and Brensault - that she responds to Ena's offer of affection, but only for the time being. Before leaving for Westhaven, Jeanne writes to her father's old attorney, and asks him two things - how much money will come to her when she is of age; and whether Madame Delere has the right to force her into a marriage with a man she does not love.

At Westhaven, (prior to the arrival of Ena, Jeanne, Ferrest and Engelten) Cecil Bourne has been at loggerheads with his elder brother, Andrew, who is master of the Manor. Andrew has no social ambitions and lives like the fishermen in the neighborhood, spending much of his time on a cottage, which he has built near the manor out on an island in the bay. Cecil, who doesn't want Andrew to disgrace him before the smart London friends whom he has invited, is overjoyed when Andrew announces that he will retire to his island cottage while Ena and the others are at the manor. But, before Andrew goes, he reproves Cecil for having become infatuated with this Madame Delere while he is supposed to be engaged to Kate Carsarde, daughter of the local vicar.

Andrew tells Cecil that Kate still waits on the cliffs every night at their old trysting place and that Cecil is treating her very unfairly. But Cecil is too infatuated with Ena to be interested in his old schoolday's sweetheart.

After Ena and the others arrive a bridge game is begun. Both Cecil and Engelton are seen heavy losers. Cecil has concealed from his friends the fact that Andrew is in existence. They believe that Cecil is the master of the manor and that the money with which he pays for his losses comes from his own pocket. In reality Cecil is drawing on Andrew's money as well as his own and keeps on playing in the hope of winning back enough to cover his speculations. Engelton, meanwhile, poses as a wealthy man more amused than troubled by the run of ill-luck. He pays mostly with promissory notes with which Ena and Ferrest are satisfied as Engelton has the bearing of a gentleman who would never repudiate a debt.

Jeanne, left to her own devices, meets Andrew, in his fisherman's garb. Andrew pretends that he is only the overseer of the Westhaven estate but Jeanne knows the truth. Rapidly their companionship ripens to love and finally Andrew proposes. On that very day, however, Jeanne has received a reply to her letter asking for information from the old solicitor. She has not opened the letter, thinking that it might reveal that she is too wealthy for a man of Andrew's simple tastes or, what would be worse, that it might tell her that she is bound to obey Ena and marry Bransault. Wishing to prolong her affair with Andrew until the last possible moment she gives him the unopened letter and tells him to keep it for her--that it may be the thing which will decide her acceptance or rejection of his proposal.

Kate Censard, is a witness to this scene on the beach and afterwards accuses Jeanne, whom she believes to be Ena, of playing fast and loose with both Cecil and Andrew. Jeanne explains who she is and the two become friends.

All is going merrily at the manor. Cecil and Engelton are still losing and Ena and Ferrest believe they will make a good thing out of their visit. Then Ena discovers that Jeanne is mixed up in a love affair with some "Andrew Bourne". Ena asks Cecil who this namesake is and he confesses that Andrew is his brother and really master of the manor. Ena proposes to write a letter to Andrew, purporting to come from Jeanne, and to so word this missive that it will disgust Andrew with her ward and bring about a misunderstanding. Then, while Jeanne is estranged from Andrew, Ena proposes to ring in Bransault and urge Jeanne to marry him. Cecil refuses to have anything to do with the plan at first but Ena tells him he must become a confederate of Ferrest and herself and help them not only deceive Jeanne but also finish plucking Engelton at cards. Otherwise they will reveal his financial situation to Andrew. Cecil, afraid of Andrew's wrath if discovered, consents.

Ena's plan works smoothly. Andrew is deceived by a note telling him that Jeanne has been amusing herself with him and must now cease meeting him, as her fiance, Mr. Bransault, is coming down to Westhaven. The note is signed "Jeanne Mesurier". Jeanne visits Andrew's cottage on the island, learns what has caused him to keep away from her, gets back the letter she had entrusted to him and quarrels with him.

She is incensed to think he could believe her guilty of such conduct as the note pretends to confess and tells him his love should have told him that the note is a forgery.

That evening Bransault, sent for by Ena, arrives at the manor. Jeanne opening the note from the solicitor, learns that she will only inherit a paltry sum when of age as her father had squandered most of the estate before his death. She springs this surprise on Bransault who is greatly excited, believing that Ena is purposely deceiving him.

Bransault tells Ena that she must either prove that Jeanne has a large fortune and aid get her to consent to marry him or - pay up what she and Ferrest owe.

Feeling that they are up against it Ena and Ferrest strive desperately that night to win heavily from Engelton. He is still paying with I.O.U's. About ten o'clock Engleton refuses to play

any more. He tells them he has caught their whole system of signals which is what he came for. He is a solicitor employed by some of the clubmen Ferrest had swindled to get the goods on Ena and Ferrest.

Ferrest and Engelten fight and Cecil becomes involved. Half-crazed, Cecil strikes Engelten with an ornament and knocks him senseless. The three then decide that they must get Jeanne and Brensault away before Engelten comes to his senses, and keeps the matter dark as long as possible. Probably they will find a way to get to the continent. At Cecil's suggestion they hide Engelten under the cliffs in the old "Smugglers' Cave" which is connected to the manor by a secret passage. Jeanne, awakened by the sounds of the struggle, follows them into the cave and demands an explanation. Ferrest locks her in the cave with the unconscious Engelten. Anything to gain time and think out a solution of their difficulties.

Cecil, remorse eating at his heart, decides to summon Andrew and make a clean breast of everything. He is afraid to go further with the desperate Ena and Ferrest. He remembers that Kate is said to wait every night for him at the old trysting place and hurries out, unobserved by the others. He tells Kate to take the launch and get Andrew. Then he sneaks back into the house.

Meanwhile Jeanne finds her way out from the cave on the cliffs after breaking down a work-eaten door. She sees Kate and Andrew coming in the launch and, diving into the sea, swims off to meet them.

Andrew, armed with a revolver, confronts Ena and Ferrest. Engelten is rescued. Kate and Cecil reconciled. Ena and Ferrest and the Count are unceremoniously bundled out into the night. And then comes the inevitable clinch of Andrew and Jeanne.

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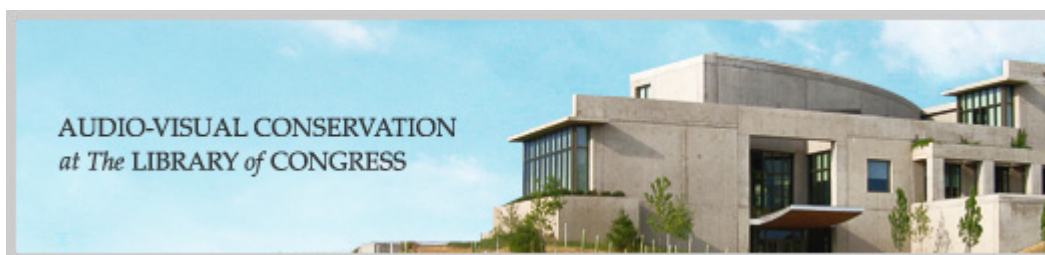
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