

## FROM LESBIA'S JOURNAL.

I have always been very thankful that I am pretty. It sounds conceited to say so—and yet I could never see why good looks should be the one natural gift which it is necessary to ignore. Why, it is absurd! One must know what one looks like! Now can one look in the glass without knowing it?

I was always glad of my share of beauty, as my mother said. I liked to see the pretty reflection smiling back at me; I liked to feel that I could always make myself look nice, even in shabby hats and torn dresses; I liked to meet the pleased, bright looks which people—especially old people—turned upon me as they passed; and, more than all, I liked the feeling that I am a pride and a pleasure to my mother and father.

I remember quite well the dreadful evening when we first arrived at our old London house, after father had failed and we had to leave our beautiful home in Liverpool. All our pictures and ornaments had been sold; and father looked around the dreary rooms so sadly that it made the tears come into my eyes just to see him; then he turned to me and framed my face in his hands.

"Well, my dear, it is a comfort to have you to look at, at any rate," he said.

"Take care of your face—it is about the only pretty thing left!"

How could I help being pleased with my looks after that?

We were horribly dull in London; for we did not know any one in the district where we lived, and our rich relatives at Lancaster Gate did not by any means appear desirous of our society.

Mother was disappointed at first, I think, for Ada and Alicia were only a few years older than I was, and there were always plenty of nice things going on in their set of which she had hoped I should come in for a share.

But they took no notice of me except to ask us up to luncheon when no one was there, and to send the page with tickets for a concert just at the last moment, when they found they could not go themselves.

I used to feel that, if I had a poor little cousin cooped up in a dingy London house, after being accustomed to everything so different, I should love to try to give her a good time; but I do not think I should have done so, for I was sure that she would have been entirely under her thumb.

One morning, however, a most unexpected event happened. Mother and I were sitting darning, and agreeing that children who make such tremendous holes in their stockings really deserve to go barefooted, when a knock came at the door and Mary appeared with a telegram addressed to me.

For a moment I was frightened out of my wits; the next I tore open the envelope, and saw at a glance that the message was from Ada.

I read it aloud.

"Having a dinner-party tonight. Want you to come. Will call in carriage at five o'clock. Please be ready."

Mother and I stared at each other for a moment, and then burst out laughing.

We knew so well what it meant. Some fine lady or other—the Honorable Miss Plantagenet or Lady Ponsonby or Tompkins—had sent an excuse at the last moment, the arrangements for the dinner had been upset, and every one had been in a panic of consternation. What were they to do? How on earth could the Honorable lady be prepared at an hour's notice?

Then Ada, good-naturedly inclined, had bethought herself of me.

"Let us send for Lesbia," she had doubtless said. "She's presentable, and she can sing for us and make herself useful. Lesbia would be delighted to come."

I am afraid I was delighted, undignified as it may seem, for I was longing for a little excitement and, besides, we had been in the same dilemma ourselves once or twice, and it would have been ill-natured to refuse.

"Well, go, dear, by all means, if you would like it," said mother. "I am glad for you to have a little change; but—"

"Yes," said I.

"I hardly know," returned mother.

"Neither do I," I replied.

We understood each other perfectly. The miserable question which is always torturing poor women's heads was in both our minds. "What was I to wear?"

"I suppose," said mother, trying to assume a careless air, and failing miserably—"I suppose the white muslin."

I uttered a cry of indignation.

"Mother, how can you? Why, the muslin isn't good enough for luncheon as things go nowadays; but for dinner?"

"I am sure, my darling child, if I only had the money you should have—"

"Yes, I know," I interrupted—"diamonds and cloth of gold—shouldn't I, mother? How nice I should look! But you haven't, and there's an end of it; and, besides, there's no time to have anything made, so we must just make the most of what we have—and that seems, as far as I can see, to be next to nothing."

"There's the black velvet," said mother.

"Mother," I exclaimed sternly, "you're a dreadful woman! Do you mean to say that you would like your beloved daughter to go to dinner in a dress which a day or two ago you were afraid would be almost too shabby for the house?"

"It's a good velvet," said mother obstinately. "I paid eighteen shillings and six-pence a yard for it when it was new. It will look better by candle-light."

"I'll tell you what I'll do. I've an idea! I am going upstairs to my bedroom. Mother's suggestion had given me an idea after all. I too she ordered the room that I had achieved a success. She started in astonishment and her cheeks flushed deeply.

"You clever child!" she cried. "Why, it's beautiful! You could not have anything prettier, Lesbia!"

"No; I think it looks very well," I said, surveying myself complacently in

the glass, and wondering what Miss Jones, the little dressmaker who had "made over" the dress for me only a week before, would have said if she could have seen the ruthless way in which I had pulled it to pieces. The discarded sleeves lay on the white counterpane, the neck-band graced the toilet-table, while ends of thread were scattered all over the floor.

"You have taken possession of the lace, I see," observed my mother, smoothing with loving fingers the delicate folds with which I had draped my arms and neck.

"Ah, money is well spent on really good lace—it always looks well!"

Ada and Alicia called for me in the afternoon; and very shabby and second-rate I felt, seated opposite to the fashionable figures in their towering hats, French kid gloves, and dainty dresses. Alicia was looking decidedly out of temper, and Ada came to me later on and asked me to sing, and, a sudden fancy seizing me, I sang "The Oak and the Ash."

It was a relief after all the elaborate French and Italian music which had gone before, and I received quite a round of applause as the last notes died away.

Mr. Conquest advanced towards me, a smile lighting up his face.

"Faithful to your colors, Miss Ransome," he said meaningly; "it was a very appropriate selection."

"Lesbia," interposed Alicia coldly, "your mother has sent for you. It's rather early; perhaps you had better slip away quietly without saying 'Good night' to any one. It might break up the party; and we don't want to lose our guests so soon."

"Oh, I say," cried Mr. Newstead eagerly, "you are not going yet! What an abominable shame! Can't you wait and give us one more song, at any rate? Is it those wretched horses you are afraid of? Do let them wait a little for once—your ladies are always so awfully considerate—it will do them no harm to wait on a warm night like this, Miss Ransome!"

"I'm afraid my poor old steed is well accustomed to waiting about!" I replied laughing. "It is only a cab horse, Mr. Newstead, and I'm ashamed to say I haven't for one moment thought of his feelings!"

Alicia flushed, and glanced hastily at Mr. Conquest to see if he had heard. What would she say if she knew I had told him that we lived in Elwin Square?

I had just finished writing the foregoing in my diary, and was leaning my chin on my hand, staring dreamily out at the dingy, deserted, rain-washed square, when someone came passing under the umbrella, and stared straight up at the window. It was Mr. Conquest. I was so utterly surprised that I never stopped to think, but sprang up and waved my hand energetically.

He took off his hat, smiling and looking bright and excited; but the moment he was out of sight, I felt overcome with confusion at the recollection of my impetuous greeting. What on earth was he doing in Elwin Square?

A week later. I have not written a word in my diary for a whole week. Somehow, after that little taste of dissipation, the ordinary humdrum life seemed very flat, stale, and unprofitable. I had not the heart to alter the velvet dress again, and so have gone on wearing the old brown cashmere morning, noon, and night, and feeling very ill-used and dejected. But yesterday morning, when I was dressing myself with afternoon tea and buttered toast, when a carriage suddenly stopped before the door, and a few moments later Ada walked into the room. I was astonished without measure to find she had come with a second invitation.

"I can wait only a quarter of an hour, Lesbia," she said; "but I want you to come back and go to the concert with us tonight. Santley is singing, and Albani—you will enjoy it very much."

I hesitated, for, though the words were kindly enough, the tone was anything but inviting. Mother's face flushed, and we exchanged quick glances of understanding.

"Oh, thank you, Ada; but I am afraid I can't manage it tonight. There are several things I want to do. I don't think—"

"Oh nonsense! You can come very well, Lesbia; there is nothing that you can't leave over till tomorrow, I'm sure. Run along, there's a good girl, and get ready!"

She spoke much more cordially now, and as I still hesitated, went on insisting in a manner which left no doubt that she was really anxious that I should go; so, nothing loath, I relented.

Alicia was waiting outside in the brougham, and her manner towards me was decidedly frigid. There was something queer, too, about Aunt Mary's reception when we reached the house, and as I sat by while the girls drank their tea, I could see that she was quietly scrutinizing me. Presently she left the room; and then the two girls began a conversation as to the failings and enormities of a certain Beatrice Farrell, which I had no difficulty in discovering was meant solely for the edification of Miss Lesbia Ransome.

"For a girl of her years," remarked Alicia, "her assurance is really appalling! Why, she is barely out of the school-room, and yet she puts herself forward and absorbs attention in the most unbecoming manner. Thorold—Mr. Conquest—was perfectly horrified. I could see; there is nothing he detests so much as forwardness in a young girl."

I kept my head bent down over the last number of *Punch*, which I had taken up from a table close at hand, and chuckled at the exaggerated delight with which the pictures had listened and made my own private comments. If she meant that last remark for me, the cap did not fit at all, and I could afford to be sublimely indifferent. It was much more interesting to hear of Mr. Conquest's Christian name—"Thorold!"

"A very nice name!"

"I shouldn't think he would trouble his head at all about such very immature charms," said Ada; "that sort of thing is not in his line."

"Oh, dear, no, not as a rule! But, you see, I had pointed her out as a friend of mine, and so of course—"

"Oh, of course," interrupted Ada meaningly—"of course! Look at her blushing. Lesbia! Doesn't she look self-conscious?"

Alicia leaned back in her chair with a complacent smile, and began toying with a magnificent diamond ring on the third finger of her left hand. I smiled blandly, but made no remark; whereupon, as if determined to make me speak, she held the ring towards me.

"What do you think of these stones, Lesbia? Aren't they magnificent?"

"Oh, splendid—perfect beauties! It's an engagement ring, I suppose?" I said blantly, at which Ada burst into a shrill fit of laughter; and Alicia, drawing herself together, replied demurely—

"Pray don't be so abrupt, Lesbia—it's very ill-bred! I don't care to make such things the subject of general conversation."

I eyed me in an exasperating fashion; but Ada was good-natured, as usual.

"Good gracious, Lesbia, what do you use for your complexion? You might give me the recipe! Did you ever see anything like it, Alicia?"

"People with red hair generally do have decent skins," observed Alicia, staring out of the window; and Ada's eyes twinkled as they met mine.

"You are going to have such a nice partner for dinner tonight, Lesbia," said Ada, changing the subject judiciously—"a man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."

"A man we have fallen in love with, and who is quite the lion of society just now—Mr. Conquest. Have you heard of him? He has come in for a lot of money and a lovely old place in the country within the last three years."