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## Better Than Life

By Charles Garvice

He blushed with a pleasure too big

"Oh, I-I like it!" he stammered.

"Do you think we don't know

that?" she said. "Why, if I ever of-

well! here's a sight worth seeing,

ladies and gentlemen-the only per

Ida laughed and boxed his ears as

she passed him, and Willie looked

after her and seemed to have at

once lost interest in life until she

came back. Then he opened his eyes

He would have given the world to

have been able to express the ad-

miration that glowed and thrilled through him; but, alas! he could

only stand and stare, like many a

No sooner had they got out of

the garden and into the road than

Willie started the distasteful subject

again. He had got Ida beside him,

and so, being happy, tried to be en-

tertaining-and, as usual, blundered

of I ord Levondale," he said, "but I

"How pleased he will be to know

that! May I tell him?" she said,

with a dangerous look of innocence

"I wasn't going to say anything against him," he explained. "I was

of the nonsense they talk about him."

"Oh, I don't know. There's noth-

ing in it, I'll wager anything. It's

because the old earl and he didn't

"But what is it?" she insisted. "We

know he has killed some one-he in-

were rather a praiseworthy actio

Willie to retail all the stale gossip

Ida stopped short and looked in-

"I want him to? Now, did I be-

"Hush!" says Cecilia hastily. They

himself. His cap was on the back

of his head, and he was smoking a

cigar, the fragrance of which reach-

ed Cecilia even before she came in

sight of him. Beside hm, in a def-

erential attitude, stood Mr. Bowles the village mason and builder rubbing

his head contemplatively with a two-

foot rule, and staring at a plot of

now he cannot fail to have heard her

repeating his name. She drew her-

self up and fought down the color

in her cheeks, and stood coldly star-

ing in front of her as the earl drop-

ped from the stile and came up to

that he was going to make any over-

tures of reconciliation or friendship. "Good-morning, Miss Dunbar," he

said and he shook hands with Cecilia,

but he only raised his hat to Ida, and,

way. Fine morning, isn't it. You

are going your rounds, I see," and he

glanced with a smile at the prim lit-

tle basket with the snowy napkin

which covered the eleemosynary

beef-tea and other invalid delicacies.

mure fashon. "But aren't you out very early? And what are you do-

ing with Mr. Bowles?"
She was accustomed to asking

everybody in the village about their

business and incomings and outcom-

ings that the question slpped out al-

I'll tell you what I'm doing, if you'll

me ungrateful for his protection yes-terday, and I should be ashamed for

him to know that I am weak enough

to contemplate building some cot-

tages to take the place of those pic-

turesque thatched ones you want

am almost sorry I spoke about them.

"I was up at dawn," he said. And

"Yes. I don't want him to think

most before she was aware of it.

promise not to tell Bobby.'

"Bobby?"

pulled down."

"Yes," said Cecilia in her soft de-

Ida flushed and bit her lip. Last night he must have heard her de-claiming that she disliked him, and

ground opposite him.

dignantly from one to the other.

heap of murders on his soul.

of the place?"

ondale-Levondale

Willie looked rather confused.

oing to say that I didn't believe any

don't believe one of them.'

Ida's face flushed.

Ida, rather impatiently,

wiser man.

Ida laughed.

They're all right," said Willie. "I ame over this morning to ask Cecfor words. ilia and you if you'd come over and

play tennis to-morrow."
"Tennis? Let me see," said Ida, with her head on one side and a reflective expression in her eyes—"ten-nis? You see I've been away so long, "You couldn't do that," he said. and in a country where it's wicked for girls to do anything but walk two fected surprise. "Now really! Well, and two in a line, with their eyes down, that I've forgotten the games of my youth. You play it with a bat son in the world she can't offend. Oh, can't she? Just you wait!"

Willie laughed with delightful en-

vment. You haven't changed a bit, I see," he said. "You've been quite happy all the time, Miss Ida?" And then he could hardly repress a sigh as he and his mouth at the picture she remembered how he had thought of made in her broad-brimmed straw hat her, and counted month after month | with its wreath of daisies and forthe days to her return. get-me-nots.

"And you will come?

"But I warn you that I shan't be able to play, and that if you get me for a partner, you'll be mad."

He smiled. Shall I? Well, I'll try not to." Then he got awkward and embar-rassed, for he knew that having delivered his message, he ought to go, unless he could make himself entertaining, and that, alas! in the presence of his beloved mistress, was impossible. And yet, elsewhere, he could talk and laugh and sing a jolly good song. Oh, Love! what fools

"Do-do you care about a ride this morning, Bobby?" he said, at last. You can have that new bay." Willie colored.

Bobby groaned. "Don't! I've got to grind morning, confound it! Oh, I wish I had the man who invented competitive examinations to myself for a quarter of an hour or so. I'd make it hot for him. I'd competitive-examination him!"

"I'm sorry you can't come," said Willie. "Well, I—I must be going. Oh, have you seen the new earl yet? "Oh, yes!" commenced Cecilia, and get on." began to tell of last night's dinner. Ida, sat for a moment drumming the

table! then she started up.
"Well, you'll excuse me," she said.
"I've heard all of this before, and I'm rather tired of the subject. After all. I think I'll come down to the village with you, Cecilia. The letters

can wait Willie looked up with what he flattered himself was a very fine imi-tation of indifference.

"Are you going now?" he asked. "I'll come with you, if you'll let me. gin it? Didn't I say, just before we I promised old bourne I'd look at came out, that I was tired of Lord pony. He thinks it's got the Levondale as a topic of conversa-

Ida laughed. "You ought to be a veterinary surgeon, Willie," she said. You doctor had come to the corner of the lane every sick animal in the place. How as Ida was holding forth, and degood-natured you are!" and she let claiming the name quite too audibly her eyes rest with innocent approval and there, on the style, sat the ear



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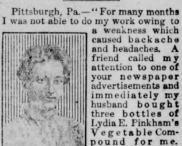
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thorough trial.

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But no, I am not. They are very unhealthy and unwholesome. But I didn't think you would take me quite

so seriously and begin at once." "Oh, I was obliged to, you see," he said. "If I'd put it off, scarlet fever or something of the kind would surely have broken out among the people, and then you would have said, "I told you so!" And where should I have been then? I am very glad you have come up. I've just been tellng Mr. Bowles that I know nothing about college architecture and he has been admitting his own ignorance. In another fvie minutes we should have been n the depths of despair, and I should have telegraphed or a London architet; and perhaps you and he wouldn't agree and then" -he shrugged his shoulders- "where

hould I be then?' Cecilia laughed her dove-like coo-"I know exactly what you want, Lord Levondale," she said, with gentle eagerness.

"Excuse me, what you want." She laughed again and blushed.

formed us of that last night, as if it "There are some capital plans of ottages at home in one of the magthan otherwise-but he has a whole zines. May I send it to you?' "Send it to Bowles," she said. "My dear Ida!" remonstrated Cecilia, softly," why should you want

Bowles," and he turned to that individual, who had pulled himself together at Miss Cecilia's appearancehe whole village, "pulled itself together." when she fluttered, dovelike, upon it-"Bowles, Miss Dunbar will kindly tell you what she wants,

and do it, will you? Cecilia murmured her thanks, and then glanced toward Willie.

tion? It has been nothing but Lev-"Oh thank you thank you I'm forgetting. ours, Lord Levondale-Mr. Willie Bulton.

It is as much as Willie can do to raise his hat and bow, for Ida has, so to speak, taken complete posession of him. From the moment Lord Levondale joined them ,her manner to Willie changed from polite indifference to . exceeding . friendliness. Her clear voce, in its smoothest and most amiable tones, rises above Cecilia's as she asks Willie about the tennis matches he has had while she was away, and about his foals and the dogs, and anything and every-

She will show my lord that she can ignore him quite as emphatically as he can ignore her. Half bewildered by the sudden and intoxicating change n her manned. Willie bows and shakes hands with Lord Levondael, and, of course, blushes.

Levondale let his eyes rest upon them. She need not have been afraid the shy, good-looking face for a moment or two, then he said pleasant-

"I have already heard of you from out mutual friend, Bobby, Mr. Bulton He was praising your horses-" as it seemed, scarcely glanced her

Willie's face grew less shy instanty: and Ida, as she stood almost sideways, and apparently engrossed in buttoning her gloves, noticed how quickly the earl had put Willie at ease. Her father, the vicar, Bobby Cecilia and now Willie had all gone lown before the nameless charm and

the tact of the new Lord Levondale "Bobby has promised to take me o see them, if you will be good enough to allow me to do so.

"I-I shall be very glad," said Wilie, warming still more. "But you mustn't believe all Bobby says, you know, Lord Levondale-I mean, he always makes the best of them. My people have been coming to call on you; but my father had a touch of gout," he went on awkwardly.

"I shall be glad to see so near ;

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Cecilia's face flushed with pleasure. In Use For Over 32 Years "Oh, Lord Levondale," she said, with a little thrill in her voice. "I-I

neighbor," said Levondale, and he led poor Willie away from his subject with: "You have a fine pasture

"You mean you have," said Willie generously, and with a laugh. Levondale smiled.

'I'm so complete a stranger that I haven't quite realized that it is mine yet," he said, with a simple modesty that touched Willie. "You won't feel like that long,

Lord Levondale," he said. "Willie's coming out," said Ida in low voice, as she and Cecilia walk-

ed on, followed by the two men. "It's Lord Levondale's manner," said Cecilia, in a like whisper. "He puts everyone at ease at once. It is

perfect." "Not every one," said Ida. "I'm inclined to be suspicious of people with perfect manners."

Cecilia looked at her with mild asonishment and amazement.

"My dear Ida, you talk as if you were fifty years old, with all the expieriences of a woman of the world.' "Experience has nothing to do with t." she retorted.

"Hush! Do not speak so loud, or they will hear you," said Cecilia warningly.

"It is no longer 'they', one has gone," said Ida, as Willie came running up alone.

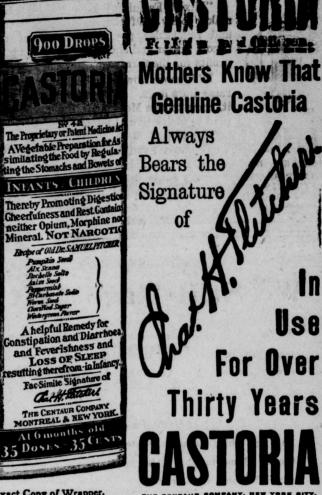
"Has the earl gone?" said Cecilia. "Yes, he had to go up to the Hall o meet some one on business. H asked me to say good bye. I say he is an awfully good fellow, isn't he?" he exclaimed beamingly; then something seemed to occur to him and to send a chill through him, and he glanced at the beautiful face under the huge hat.

'It all depends upon what constitutes a good fellow," she said, with her chin up, and Willie drew a breath of relief.

"You don't seem to like him, Ida,"

he said timidly. "If you mean that I have not fallen prone at Lord Levondale's feet in blind adoration after seeing him four -I-I mean twice"-Her color rose and fell as she tripped on the admission-"you are quite right."

"Well, I don't adore him," said Wil- she remarked, severely. lie with a laugh; "but I do think he Willie got confused. Ever since she

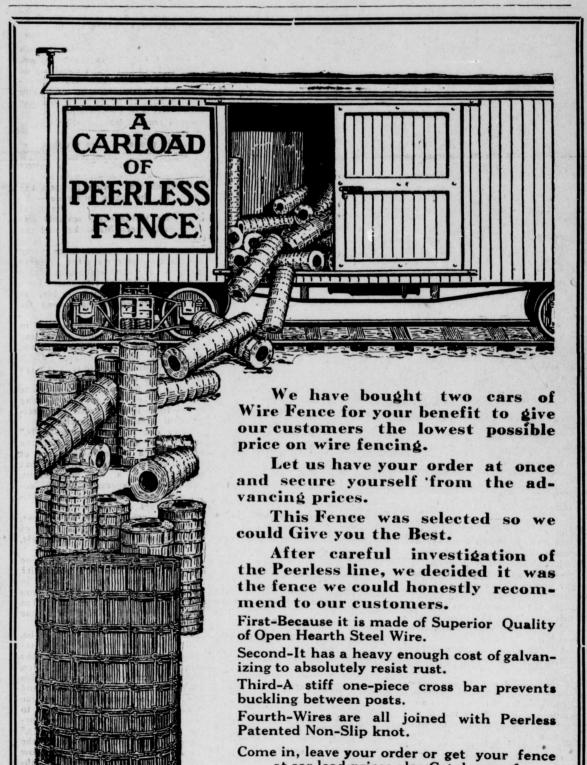


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is very friendly and what you girls "We girls don't call men 'nice.' We keep that epithet for things we eat,'

was a tiny child she could bully and browbeat him. Well, what I meant to say was

that he seems ready to meet a fellow half-way, don't you know, and (Continued on page eight)



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