

HELEN LAFONE OR THE FOES OF A HOUSEHOLD. A TALE OF ENGLISH LIFE.

CHAPTER XIII.

When Alice had been at Brantwood a week Helen's peace of mind had gone; and indeed the situation was one which might have perplexed and troubled many an older and more experienced woman.

"You surprise me. I should have enjoyed that kind of thing." "That is not true," thought Helen. "I have no taste for it at all. Sometimes it almost spoils the pleasure of having one's own house."

"You don't mean to say that you talk to him about such things. I thought there was always a kind of tacit understanding in a house that the husband should never be bothered about anything of that kind."

"Please do. I have no doubt it will be of immense value to me," said Helen, gravely. "If you want to keep Percival's affection—"

"Do not get into a temper about it. In that respect you are really not much improved. Last night you got quite infuriated when we were talking about the possibility of towing to the island in half an hour."

"I cannot say. It would probably depend upon the exact nature of the remark you made to him." "He said he knew you were not perfect, but that people who were always right could afford to be generous to their less fortunate friends."

"Who has misunderstood you?" "Most people misunderstand me. There are very few people with whom I feel in sympathy."

was graceful and smiling and amiable; and she stabbed her adversary in the dark. She was trying to lower Helen in her husband's eyes. This made Mrs. Moore angry; amusement came in when she imagined Alice picturing to herself that she would succeed, repeating her little conversation with Percival in all good faith, unable to look below the surface and see the spite which had prompted his replies.

A sudden longing filled her heart for Dr. Hazlett, a man who had always helped her in her troubles. She could have told him of even such a difficulty as this, and his clear common sense would have suggested something to be done.

The rain began to fall again, and she had to go into the house, where she found Percival, who had returned sooner than he had expected him.

But it was not the first time she had to consider the question, nor was she able always to bring the same clear sight and sense to bear upon it. The longer Alice stayed, the more did Helen feel the want of sympathy between them.

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own sake. How to keep her secret and yet to get rid of her unwelcome guest she could not tell. At last an idea occurred to her. "I will speak to her," she thought. "She is at least straightforward. There will be no need to beat about the bush."

"She will probably believe it is a first step to confession that I have failed to keep Percival's affection, but I cannot help that."

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