

AN ADVERTISEMENT AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

On rare occasions Mrs. Lindley or her daughter would visit the library during reading hours. After one such visit Lillian Lindley went to her mother and said anxiously:

"Mamma, I wish that girl had never entered the house! Do you know, I feel positive that foolish boy will fall in love with her? Wouldn't it be horrid?"

Mrs. Lindley shrugged her plump shoulders and replied, "For pity's sake do not mention your forebodings to your brother, Lillian. You might put the idea into his head, and, once there, I defy anyone to do anything with him."

"She is certainly educated and refined and—yes, I suppose some people would consider her rather pretty," said the young lady thoughtfully. "One comfort is that he can't see her face; do you not think so, *chère mere*?"

"Yes," sighed the mother. "And, Lillian, *perhaps* we could persuade him that really it is not *quite* the thing for her to be there with him every day."

That very evening Mrs. Lindley hinted as much to her son; but more than that mild hint she never ventured upon.

"It is *preposterous*, mother, to think of any impropriety, and I should say rather late in the day to bring it up now." So no more was said, and the readings went on as usual.

As the days went by John Lindley felt more and more that, without sweet Bessie Radnor, his life would be a blank. Not that he thought himself in love, but he realized her ministrations of word and voice were daily growing more indispensable.

After that Sunday afternoon it became quite a matter of course that a song should preface the reading. One day, after a pathetic little ballad, Lindley exclaimed suddenly, "I would give something to have seen your expression as you sang, Miss Radnor. Can't you—won't you, tell me what you look like?"

A pretty laugh was the only response.

"Please do," he continued.

"But it would be impossible for one to correctly describe one's self; I am positive I have read that 'straightway one goes from the glass and forgets what manner of man he is,' or something to that effect," she said.

"Well, if so, there is a mirror in close proximity to the piano," he persisted.

"Oh, Mr. Lindley, I—I could not stand before the glass and deliberately describe myself; *indeed I could not*."

"Very well," he replied, in a hurt tone. "I was in sober earnest; but I did not think it anything so terrible: simply a blind man's whim, which, somehow, I thought you would respect."

"If—if you really care, I suppose it is foolish in me to make a fuss over it," she said quietly, in fact so quietly that Lindley barely caught all the words; but he heard her walk a step or two, then pause.

"I am to tell you just what I see, am I?" she inquired.

"Exactly, if you will be so good," he replied.

"Well, I see a tall, rather thin figure, a pale, in fact I may say rather sallow, face, with just now considerable color in both cheeks—please put that down to excitement," and she gave a little laugh, "big gray, sad looking eyes, and—and long lashes; that is all except short, what mamma calls 'rippy brown gold' hair! There! I never felt so foolish in all my life!"

"I shall never forget your kindness. I wish more than ever I could see for myself," he said wistfully. "But, tell me, why should your eyes look sad, and why are you pale? Miss Radnor, you have never told me about yourself in the least. You surely know I am your true friend."

Before she had time to reply a knock came at the door, and to Lindley's chagrin a visitor was announced; so the reading for that afternoon was put aside.

"Will you not shake hands with me before you go?" he asked.

Bessie quietly did as he requested.

"Good-bye," he said. "Remember, I am your friend."

All day and way into the night Lindley thought of the "tall, slim girl with sad gray eyes" and "rippy brown gold" hair, and before they met again he knew he loved her from the depth of his heart. It was hard for him to keep down his desire to tell her of his love, but he knew if once he let her suspect his feelings he would frighten her away.

"I can afford to wait and"—here a sharp pang went through him—"if I am blind how could I ask her to marry me?"

So the days passed in just the same old way, with perhaps a subtle difference, which Bessie Radnor felt, but could not explain. Besides, poor child, her thoughts were oftener with her sick mother at this time than upon the books she read. Lindley noticed a difference in her reading, but said nothing. She had excused herself from singing the past few days.

"She is not well, or in some trouble," thought Lindley, sadly, "and I am powerless to help her."

It was an afternoon in the end of March. Bessie was in her usual place, awaiting Mr. Lindley's arrival, for, strange to relate, he was not there when she came in. With a sad, far-off look she sat gazing into the glowing fire. To-day she realized that only a few more days and she would be motherless—alone. Half an hour passed, and still she sat regardless of everything but that terrible thought.

Only that morning the doctor had said, "It is almost over now. I can do nothing more for her. Keep her up with wine and beef tea."

And Bessie knew that to procure these luxuries she must leave her mother in a stranger's care while she made the money to procure them, and oh, the terrible thought that she might not be allowed to spend every precious moment by her darling's side.

The door opened softly, a tall, handsome man stood within, gazing eagerly into the fire-lit room. The girl neither heard nor heeded. She was sobbing softly. A look of intense surprise, followed by one of alarm, swept over the watcher's face. In an instant he was by her side. A touch on the shoulder startled the girl. She raised her brimming, half-blinded eyes, and for the first time met John Lindley's gaze. There he stood, with the bandages removed, his eager brown eyes looking tenderly down upon her.

"Mr. Lindley," she almost screamed. "You—you—can see. You will not be blind. I am—so—glad!"

"No, thank God!" he exclaimed fervently. "But tell me, Miss Radnor, child, what is the trouble? Don't cry so: don't. You hurt me. Let me help you. Do tell me what is the matter," he pleaded, as she sobbed aloud.

"My mother, oh, my mother!" she wailed.

In alarm Lindley bent over her.

"I have kept you from her? She is worse? I will call the carriage and take you to her at once."

A short time later, and they were being driven at a quick rate toward B—— street.

Only once did Lindley break the silence. Stooping, he wrapped the carriage robe close about her. As he did so, "Child," he said, tenderly, "why *did* you not tell me how sick your mother really was?"

"I was afraid you would not understand how I could have the heart to leave her," she answered brokenly, "but we are so *very* poor I *had* to. And, Mr. Lindley, if mother dies, I hope I may too."

"God forbid!" he said earnestly, and his heart ached with longing to fold her in his arms and try to comfort her. And so occupied was he with the heart-broken girl that he forgot to look about him with his newly restored sight.

As he helped her from the carriage, he said, "I cannot forgive myself for having selfishly kept you from you from your sick mother, Miss Radnor."

Just then he raised his eyes and saw the miserable house they were about to enter; a look of utter surprise—almost of horror—crossed his face. And Bessie Radnor knew that never before he had realized how desperately poor they were.

"Mr. Lindley," she faltered, "if it had not been for *you* my mother and I would have starved! No, I did not mean that," she corrected herself, "for God would have sent some other helper; but I *never* can tell you the good you did by—by being laid aside with bandaged eyes."

"Then I tell you truly, if *that* be so, I am not regretful of one long, dark, *even* most *hopeless* hour, my darling, for I *love* you!" and his deep voice shook with emotion.

No reply came, nor, just then, did he expect any; for even then they were ascending the narrow, creaking stairs which led to Mrs. Radnor's room.

Leaving Mr. Lindley outside, Bessie entered. She found her mother alone.

"You've come at last, dear," she murmured.

"Yes, darling little mother, at last: and I have brought our kind friend, Mr. Lindley, to see you. You won't mind, dear, will you? He is so determined to see you." For Bessie remembered the decided way in which he said: "In any case, I am *sure* you will permit me to see your mother."

"I will see him," said Mrs. Radnor, faintly.

Half reluctantly the girl opened the door, and without a word Lindley entered the room. A thrill of horror went through him, as one glance took in the bare, miserable room and the two fair occupants thereof. At once he knew the end was near. He said a few kind words to Mrs. Radnor, then turned to her daughter.

"Will you give me a sheet of paper and a pencil, please." He wrote a few hasty lines. "I don't like to trouble you, but will you find some one who will carry that to its destination?" he said. "I would do it myself," he thought, "but speak with Mrs. Radnor alone I must." But his heart smote him as he thought of the weary looking girl going up and down the many steep stairs.

The door had scarcely closed behind her when he drew a chair beside the dying woman.

"Mrs. Radnor," he said, "I feel sure that you are fully aware of your condition, and I have something of great importance to tell you—something that may make you feel happier. I know the thought of leaving your daughter is your only regret in leaving this world."

The saint-like face before him looked its assent, before the faintly uttered words, "It is," came from the trembling lips.

"Mrs. Radnor, I love your daughter. I love her from the depth of my heart. Could you, would you, urge her to marry me before you leave her?" A faint flush suffused the sufferer's face. "My darling *will* have to care for her. Oh! My Father, I thank Thee!"

Lindley pressed her hand. "Mrs. Radnor, he said, "look at me. Do you think you can trust your daughter in my keeping?"

The brilliant eyes gazed searchingly into the man's earnest face for a moment. "I can, I can," she cried.

Here the door opened, and to her utter astonishment Bessie saw Lindley bend over her mother's thin hand and press a fervent kiss upon it.

Lindley rose from his chair, walked up to the girl, and, taking her hand, led her to her mother's side.

Mrs. Radnor tried to speak, but she was too weak. An imploring glance at Lindley was enough. Very gently he said, "I have been your mother what I first told you, my darling, and in your absence I won her over to my side. Tell me, can you trust me as your mother? Darling, will you give me a little love for my whole heart full?"

Bessie gave a quick glance at the man's pleading face, then at her mother as she lay against the pillow wan and pale; and with a shuddering cry threw herself on her knees beside the bed.