

The rent is £60 a year, and it will suit me admirably. But I could not obtain possession till I agreed to take the furniture, which has been valued at £200. As it was an impossibility to live in a house without furniture, the opportunity seemed to me too good a one to be missed. Will you therefore kindly send me a check for the amount in question as early as possible, and oblige,

Your affectionate nephew,

LOUGHTON."

After three days came the following laconic reply :

"Check for £200 inclosed, but don't do this sort of thing again. An agreement is an agreement, and no further demands beyond the usual allowance will receive attention"

The letter was undated and unsigned, but it was evidently in the countess's own writing. A few days later the earl removed to his new home.

He started his modest establishment with two women and one man-servant. A gardener was engaged to come once a week to attend to the lawn and flowers. When the earl had paid his hotel bill and a few other expenses he found that upward of two-thirds of his £150 had gone already, while more than two months of the quarter had yet to run. But this did not trouble him. He calculated, and rightly, that when once he was established in Laurel Cottage he might go on credit for everything he wanted for several months to come. As a matter of fact, he was inundated with offers from tradespeople of all kinds, so that his only difficulty lay in choosing which one of them he should patronize. Even horses and carriages were pressed on him, but he decided that for the present both stables and coach-house should remain empty. He might, perhaps, have afforded to buy a cheap cob if an opportunity for doing so had offered itself; however, there would be time enough to think about such luxuries by and by. But in this matter, as in most others, he was probably actuated by some motive other than appeared on the surface.

Long before the earl had got quietly settled down one carriage after another came flashing up to the little green gate of Laurel Cottage. His lordship was at home to everybody that called. Everybody was charmed with his affability and the simple kindness of his demeanor. "What delightful manners!" exclaimed the ladies, with one accord. "What ease and polished courtesy! A thorough man of the world, evidently." Could these fair dames have seen his lordship six weeks previously, as he sat behind a long pipe in the coffee room of the B. B., with his brandy-and-water in front of him, what would their thoughts of him have been?

Calls, as a matter of course, were succeeded by pressing invitations to dinner. But the earl frankly pleaded his poverty; in fact, he almost made a parade of it before his newly found friends. "You say that you live three miles away. Pray tell me how I am to reach you when I have neither a hoof nor a wheel on the premises." Then, of course, came offers to send the brougham or other conveyance for him, which, equally as a matter of course, involved the sending of him home when the evening was at an end. For the earl had made up his mind that if people wanted him they must both send for him and send him back, and before long this necessity came to be accepted as a well understood fact among those whom he honored with his company.

The vicar of the parish was one of the first to call at Laurel Cottage. Before leaving he expressed a hope that he should occasionally see his lordship at church, and his lordship was good enough to promise that next Sunday morning should find him in the vicar's pew. It was quite a novel sensation for the earl to find himself inside a place of worship. The vicar's wife handed him an elegantly bound, large print prayer book, which he accepted with a smile and a little bow, but when he tried to follow the service and find the different places he got "terribly fogged," as he afterward expressed it; and as he was afraid to let people see the dilemma he was in, he shut the prayer book up, altogether by and by, and tried to put on the air of a man who was so thoroughly familiar with the service that the book was rather an incumbrance to him than otherwise. "The places used to be easy enough to find when I was a lad," he muttered to himself; "but I suppose the Rubric has been altered since then, and evidently altered for the worse."

He had been rather dubious on his arrival at Brimley whether some of the very big people of the neighborhood might not still bear in mind some of the escapades of his early years, and decline to acknowledge him. But his uneasiness on this score was quickly dispelled. A new generation had grown up since he was a young man, and whatever any of the older people might remember, they held their tongues in public, and welcomed him as warmly as if he were the most immaculate of men and peers.

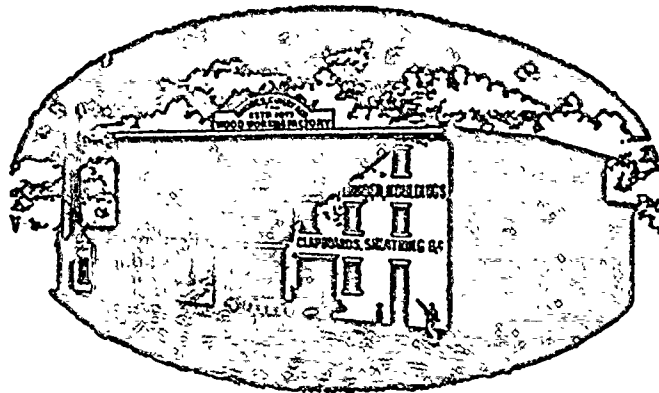
The nearest house to Laurel Cottage was a large red-brick mansion of modern erection and imposing appearance. It bore the dignified name of Bourbon House, from the fact of a certain French prince having at one time made it his home for a few months. As the earl was passing the large gates one day a basket-carriage containing two very pretty young ladies was coming out. It then struck him for the first time that he had never been at the trouble to inquire who lived at Bourbon House, neither could he call to mind that any one from there had ever left a card at the cottage. As soon as he reached home he sent for his man and questioned him. It then came out that Bourbon House was the home of a certain Mr. Orlando Larkins and his two sisters—the pretty girls whom the earl had marked. The youthful Orlando, it appeared was the son of a celebrated chemist—Larkins *pere* having been none other than the inventor and vendor of a certain world-famed pill. Everybody has heard of Larkins' pills, and hundreds of thousands have swallowed them.

(To be continued.)

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