

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

CHAPTER XIII.

THINKING THE FIRST BLOW.

They were both reading. Alice turned over the pages of a new novel with a feeling that two stories were the most wearisome things in the world; and Helen was trying to concentrate her attention upon a pamphlet which Percival had asked her to read. But she could not do it; she kept thinking of what she wanted to say to Alice, and wondering what would be the result of their conversation. So she presently laid down her book, saying: "Are you very much interested in that novel, Alice? Because if you are not I should like to talk a little."

"As much as you like, I believe all novels are dull, and this is the dullest of all. It is by a woman, you know—that 'A Looker On,' who writes so much now. I wish she would look on a little longer and do a little more purpose before inflicting her experiences on other people."

"I never read her books," said Helen. "She is one of the writers I most dislike. She is vulgar."

"For once we are agreed. What do you want to talk about?"

"About ourselves."

Alice turned her head rather more quickly than usual in the direction of the speaker. Helen was seated on a low chair near a table on which stood a reading lamp, the light of which was necessary to read with comfort the small print of her pamphlet; her face was therefore fully visible. Alice lay upon a couch which stood a little in the shadow; so far she had the advantage.

"Why," said Alice, after a pause, "are we such very interesting people?"

"I think we are interesting to one another just now, and there is a good deal to say."

"Is there? Really, I was not aware of it. I don't think I have anything to say at all; so you had better begin."

"I wanted to say for one thing that I should think you must be getting tired of us. Do not stay here longer than you feel inclined."

"There is only one way of interpreting your words—namely, that you want me to go. Is not that it?"

"I think, for your own sake, it would be better if you did."

"For my sake? Why for my sake? It is very kind of you to concern yourself about me. But if it is not displaying too much curiosity, may I not know to what I am indebted for it?"

"You seem hardly able to take care of yourself, so since you are in my house, I feel it my duty as your sister to take care of you."

Nothing annoyed Alice more than any assertion of authority on Helen's part, and she answered rather sharply.

"For the matter of that we are not sisters at all, and I should think you could hardly fail to remember."

"Certainly I have had many reminders all my life. However, that fact only bears out what I said before. For your own sake I think you ought to go home."

"And why for my own sake, as I asked you before?"

"You are putting yourself in a false position with Percival."

"Really, would you mind explaining a little?" Her face as she spoke assumed an expression of amusement which Helen felt to be rather unusual.

"It is nearly two years," she said, "since I was married, but I do not suppose you have forgotten what you said the night before my wedding, nor on the day I told you of my engagement."

She looked at Alice as she spoke, but Alice's eyes did not meet hers. They were fixed upon the design on the cover of her book, which she examined very closely, raising the volume close to her face and tracing the outline with the tip of her finger with great apparent interest, and her head slightly on one side. She smiled to herself as Helen spoke, and when she had finished, said: "No, I had not forgotten; neither, I see, had you."

"And you came here I had quite forgotten, and even now I have some difficulty in believing that you can seriously cherish any such intention."

"Indeed," with another smile.

"Even had you any such idea when you came, you must see now how preposterous, and more than preposterous, it is. By this time you must be convinced of Percival's love for me, and for that very reason he could not love you. No man could love us both. You are only making yourself ridiculous."

If Helen's temper was hot, Alice's was not slow to be kindled. The blood rushed in a torrent to her face as Helen spoke, and she asked: "In whose eyes am I making myself ridiculous?" laying scornful emphasis on the last word.

"So far, to mine only. Percival, fortunately, has no idea of what is going on."

"And in your eyes I am ridiculous," with a little laugh. "You will forgive my saying that the idea has no great terrors for me."

"Possibly not, but before long you would be worse than ridiculous, and that would be if Percival saw it."

"Indeed, may I ask what I should do then?"

"There is no need to say, because it will never come to pass. You are under a great mistake if you suppose that you will stay here until Percival sees it. Before then you will be good enough to leave us."

"She rose as she spoke, and stood looking down upon Alice's prostrate figure. Her eyes flashed, and her voice quivered with indignation, but it was no louder than usual.

Alice looked up at her in astonishment.

"Upon my word, you adopt a very strange tone. So you threaten to turn me out of the house if I don't go as soon as you are tired of me. Unfortunately the feeling is not mutual. I am not tired of you, and I do not intend to go until I am."

"Do not go to far," said Helen. Then after a pause she went on in a different tone.

"Granted that you succeed, what would you have gained? Let me hear that."

"I should have gained my turn. I should have made you feel as I did two years ago."

"You are wicked," said Helen, in the same low passionate voice. "You can bear to give up nothing which you have once chosen to wish for. Nothing is sacred in your eyes; you have no consideration either for your own reputation or that of any one else. But do not for a moment suppose that I will have your way in this matter, or that I am going to tolerate a plan to overthrow my happiness. Since you have declared your intentions I will do the same, and I shall make you leave this house, as I said before, for your own sake."

"Oh, yes," said Alice, affecting to stifle a yawn; "I know very well that you are in no danger at all. And now, do you think we have talked about it long enough? I for one, am quite tired."

Helen made no answer. She turned and left the room. She had intended to go upstairs, but as she crossed the hall a breath of the cool wind of an autumn night blew in upon her from the open door, and she turned aside and went into the garden.

"I have failed," she thought, as she walked up and down. "I felt sure I should, but I owed it to her to try. Now, I suppose, it is open warfare. What shall I do to get her away?"

Her forehead contracted in reflection. Suddenly she paused in her walk, saying: "That is an idea, if I can only carry it out."

CHAPTER XIV.

AN INTERRUPTED JOURNEY.

Perfect silence reigned over Bradwood. Alice was in bed with a slight sore throat. Percival was away—he had gone the day before to attend a horse fair in another county—and Helen was in Percival's study writing letters. That was what she had told Alice when she was going to do when she went up to her room after breakfast to inquire after her and beg her not to get up an instant before she felt inclined. In reality she had one letter to write, but it seemed very difficult to compose; for half-a-dozen sheets of paper with as many beginnings lay around her, and the seventh over which she was now bending bore as yet no more than the words, "Dear Percival."

At last she seemed to find an idea, for she dipped her pen into the ink, and began to write, and this is what followed the first words:

"I do not know whether you are as tired of Alice as I am; you don't say much, but I think I can read your face. She appears to have established herself here for a season, and I have been racking my brains for a polite way of getting rid of her. I think I have found one at last. I will go away myself and stay for a week or two. When I am no longer here she must go home, and I do not think she will return when I come back. I shall go to London—business connected with Dr. Hazlitt's money will serve for an excuse to those who make inquiries—and will either write or telegraph my address. I shall expect you to follow me as soon as you can. I do not think I am acting without reflection; you know I spend the whole day with Alice—you seldom see her except in the evening—and I confess I can endure it no longer. I gave her broad hints a day or two ago, but she did not take them. You will not mind doing without me for a day or two.—HELEN."

She read it over with tolerable satisfaction, thinking: "I do not think that will tell him anything I do not want him to know, and he will never guess what these 'broad hints' were. I think it will do."

She folded the letter, put it into an envelope and addressed it to her husband, after which she went upstairs again to Alice's room.

"Are you any better?" she asked coming forward.

"Yes, I have almost gone off now. I think I shall get up soon."

"I came to tell you," said Helen composedly; "that I am going to London today. I shall take an early train this afternoon."

"Is not that a rather sudden resolution?" asked Alice, after a pause.

"I thought of it this morning."

"And are you going in that way without rhyme or reason?"

"The reason is, business about some money for those who are curious enough to ask for one."

"You don't think it necessary to supply one for my benefit?"

"If you can assure me sincerely that you don't know why I am going, I can give you a reason also."

"No; you are right; I do not want a reason." Then after a short pause she went on, "Since we are so sincere, I may as well tell you that I did not think you would act so promptly or so successfully. For the present you have saved your end, but I think for the present only."

"There is no need to discuss that question; it can wait."

"What will Percival do?"

"I expect he will join me in a day or two."

"How will he like you going away like this without consulting him?"

"He does not require me to ask his permission for everything I do, as if I were a child."

"Well, you had better send word to them at home that I am going back to-day."

"Do not hurry away," said Helen, carelessly, moving towards the door as she spoke. "You have the whole day before you, though with that sore throat I should advise you to be late. Of course you will have an carriage you like to take you home."

"She went away, leaving Alice very angry, and going to her own room rang the bell."

"I have to go to London on business, Mason," she said, when the maid came in. "I shall want you to pack a box for me. I will tell you what I want putting in."

"Shall you want only one box, ma'am?"

"That is all. I shall only be away for a few days, and shall not want many things."

"I suppose you will want me ma'am?"

"No, I think not; for a few days I can manage alone."

"Very good, ma'am," replied Mason, who saw nothing strange in this; she had never served a mistress so independent of her help as Mrs. Moore.

Meanwhile she got out her mistress's dresses that a selection might be made.

"You need not put in that one, Mason," as the woman took down a black lace dinner dress. "I do not think I shall want any evening dresses."

Mason demurred, and Helen at last apparently persuaded to the contrary, allowed the dress to be put in.

The packing took some time. Helen prolonged it as much as possible in order to fill up the time. Mason interrupted her occupation with various remarks and questions, to which her mistress replied.

"I suppose Miss Lafone will be going home today, ma'am, since you are going away?"

"Yes, she will choose her own time of course. See that she is properly wrapped up, Mason. I do not want her to make her throat worse."

"Certainly, ma'am," replied Mason, to whom these words were very far from conveying the true state of the case.

The afternoon came, and with it the time for Helen to go. She had given all her directions; the butler had been instructed to tell Mr. Moore as soon as he came home that there was a note for him in his study, she had said good-bye to Alice, and at last had driven off with her single trunk and her travelling bag to catch the 2.50 train. She reached the station in plenty of time, the footman took her ticket, put her baggage into the van, and saw the train start before returning to the carriage.

It was an express train, and swift, even motion was soothing to Helen, after the anxiety in which she had been during the past few days. Ever since she had had the idea that the only way to rid herself of Alice was to go away herself, she had been "racking her brains," as she told Percival, for a good and plausible excuse for leaving home, and it was only on this same evening that one had suggested itself to her. She had

once been to London in connection with her legacy from Dr. Hazlitt, and it had occurred to her to allege a second business call as a reason for going away so suddenly.

She felt at ease for the first time for many days, and as she leaned back in the railway carriage and looked out upon the beautiful country through which the train was speeding she began to think of the immediate future, and to ask herself why she should go to London. She had certainly given reasons for going to London, but after all, what did it matter? She did not want to go; the country looked so beautiful sleeping in the mild autumn sunshine that she felt it was beyond her strength to voluntarily exile herself in London. It would make no difference to Percival where she went, and she could easily send him her address from one place or another. She took her Bradshaw from her bag and began to study the railway map, to find some place to which she could get without much difficulty from the next junction, Dewhurst.

She studied the map for some time, and at last her eye fell upon a name which seemed familiar to her—Miller's Gate. Where had she heard of Miller's Gate? At last she recollected. Some years before—long before Percival had come to Osmotherley—Dr. Hazlitt had been to Miller's Gate, and had told her when he came home what a strange little place it was, completely separated from the world in spite of the railway which ran through it. He had said it looked like a village which had sprung up of itself, the houses having been dotted about the hill-side as if by chance. It was on the main line. She could get there from Dewhurst without changing; neither was it a long journey—not more than an hour and a half. Her mind was made up. She would go to Miller's Gate, and, as she saw the train would reach Dewhurst in a few minutes, she put back her Bradshaw and prepared to leave the train.

At Dewhurst she changed and made inquiry about the next train to Miller's Gate. There was one in half an hour, and she got her ticket and sat down to wait for it, feeling happy in the thought that when she next saw Percival she would have him to herself. The train was late, and she did not leave Dewhurst until half an hour later than she expected. Perhaps that accounted for the unusual speed at which they went; but she wished in a vague, easy way that the carriage would not rock so—she was being tossed from side to side in a most ridiculous way. Faster and faster they went, the carriage jolted more and more, and as she began to feel the discomfort of such a movement continued for any length of time, her amusement gave way to annoyance, and she began to think—

"It surely cannot be safe to go at such a speed," when the carriage lurched even more violently. She was thrown from her seat, she involuntarily put out her hand to save herself, she heard a woman scream in the next compartment, she felt herself falling, and had a sensation of receiving a heavy blow from something; all grew dark around her, and she knew no more.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The usual treatment of scotch is very unsatisfactory, as thousands of despairing patients can testify. On this point a trustworthy medical writer says:—"Proper local treatment is positively necessary to success, but many, if not most of the remedies in general use by physicians afford but temporary benefit. A cure certainly cannot be expected from snuffs, powders, douches and washes. Ely's Cream Balm is a remedy which combines the important requisites of quick action, specific curative power, with perfect safety and pleasantness to the patient."

Miss Minnie Freeman, the brave Nebraska school teacher who tied the pupils together and led them through the blizzard, is 19 years old and very pretty. She is an Eastern girl, and was educated at the York Methodist college, where she graduated with distinction in 1886.

One Good Point. Out of the many possessed by Burdock Blood Bitters is that it may be taken at all seasons of the year, and by either young or old. In this way the three busy B's are always at work and doing good.

Commercial Union and Loyalty. Goldwin Smith, in a letter to the Mail depicting the progress of the movement for commercial union, has stripped the Tories' god, Loyalty, of all its fine trappings and showed what it really is. Hear him:—"When we talk of our loyalty we are hardly conscious of the complete change which the traditional object of that loyalty, while retaining the same in form, has in reality undergone. In the Eastern story, the assembled creatures sometimes prostrate in homage before the figure of King Solomon which remains motionless, leaning on a staff. At length, an ant having eaten through the staff, the figure falls, and it is seen that King Solomon is dead. We continue in like manner to bend in loyalty before a monarchy which political life has fed, and for which those who are nearest to it see its real condition neither feel any affect to feel the ancient reverence, through they may be willing to enjoy the feasting and the show of a Jubilee. When we now worship with our faces turned to the East, our homage is rendered no longer by a crowned sovereign

or by a coroneted nobility, but by an aggregation of traders, farmers, factory hands, hired laborers and Irish peasants who, to say the least, are neither in intelligence nor in the antiquity of their accession to power at all superior to ourselves. On the seat of the Bantagassas all the sentimental income which Canadian fancy can offer him it is to be feared that he would in his heart prefer 'a pot of the smallest ale.' One may surely have the most intense affection for Old England, and the strongest desire to preserve the moral in which binds us to her, without desisting of our loyal duty to sacrifice the interest of the masses on this side of the water to the interests of the masses on the other side.

Well Worth Trying. A medicine which has stood the test of time for many years and always given the best satisfaction as has Hagar's Pectoral Balm is certainly well worth trying for Coughs, Colds, Hoarseness and all Throat troubles for which it is so highly recommended.

Husbands as Amateurs. Sometimes the effect of marriage is to transform a male exquisite into a slover, especially if the care of poverty and an increasing family rest upon his shoulders; or it may be that he is by nature slovenly and easily relaps into that ideal destroying condition when the vanities of youth cease to act as a spur. Husbands of this kind commonly let their beards grow, neglect to polish the heels of their boots, and develop an irritating tendency to effect rubbers in all weather. Their hats, if not actually shabby, are usually antiquated and their trousers being worn too short invariably bag most ugly at the knees. They wear long overcoats, and either carry no umbrellas (caring nothing for their dingy old clothes) or umbrellas of prodigious circumference, of cheap material, and warranted to turn inside out every time the wind happens to catch them right.

These men, if living out of town, are almost sure to hatch a fondness for poultry; and to spend their Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings pottering about henpods and watching the strut of their favorite roosters. They care nothing for society, not much for the opera or the play, and are alarmingly prone to fall asleep over their newspapers in the evening. They usually prefer a pipe to a cigar, and they are mighty consumers of beer. Even to such base uses may the married man descend.—Herald of Health.

Almost miraculous are some of the cures accomplished by the use of Ayer's Sarsaparilla. In the case of R. L. King, Va., who suffered for 47 years with an aggravated form of scrofula, Ayer's Sarsaparilla effected astonishing results.

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Thomas Munday, Sharon Grove, Ky., writes: "Several months ago my hair commenced falling out, and in a few weeks my head was almost bald. I tried many remedies, but they did no good. I finally bought a bottle of Ayer's Hair Vigor, and, after using only a part of the contents, my head was covered with a heavy growth of hair. I recommend your preparation as the best hair-restorer in the world."

"My hair was faded and dry," writes Mabel C. Hardy, of Delaware, Ill.; "but after using a bottle of Ayer's Hair Vigor it became black and glossy."

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The holiday issue, now ready, is complete in itself, containing no serial matter. The cover is enriched by a number of border printed in gold. The price is as usual, 25 cents. It contains the most delightful stories, poems, and essays by distinguished writers, and superb illustrations. Among the important articles to appear during the year 1888 are the following—Send for prospectus: ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON will contribute regularly to each number during the year. He will write of many topics, and his work will be in a familiar and personal way, which will form new bonds of friendship between the author and his thousands of readers. His first paper, entitled "A Chapter on Dreams," appearing in the January number, he relates incidentally, in connection with the general subject, some interesting facts concerning the origin of the new fennel story. "Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." RALPH WARD BENTLEY, of Chaplin, will be the first of an especially important and interesting series of papers on railways, their administration and construction, including great engineering feats, famous tunnels and bridges, and indeed, those branches of the subject which in this day engage the attention of the whole country. The illustrations which will accompany these papers will be very elaborate, original and beautiful. The authors and the titles of the future articles will be announced later.

DR. D. A. SARGENT'S paper on Physical Preparation and Physical Training will be continued by several of increasing interest, which have already appeared.

ILLUSTRATED ARTICLES of special interest will be given on the Lampyris of Waterloo, by John C. Ropes; on "The Man at Arms," by E. H. Blandford; two papers by Edward L. Blyden, illustrating results in recent Egyptian research; a further article by William F. Apthorp, on a subject connected with his recent contribution on Wagner, and many others of great interest. Professor Slater's articles on the Surface of the Earth will be continued; and articles upon two of the most interesting groups of contemporary European writers will be accompanied by rich and novel portrait illustrations.

ELECTRICITY in its various applications as a motive power, Explosives, etc., will be the subject of another group of illustrated articles of equal practical interest by leading authorities upon these topics.

REUBEN SWINNEY'S LETTERS written to his friend Moschles, at a peculiarly interesting time of his career, will furnish the substance of several articles of great interest to musical readers, which will be illustrated with portraits and drawings from Moschles's own hand. FICTION will be strong, not only in the work of well-known writers, but in that of new authors, in securing whose co-operation the magazine has been so fortunate during its first year of publication. A serial novel, entitled "First Harvests," by Frederic J. Simpson will be begun in the January number, and early in the year novelettes will be published by Henry James and H. C. Fennner. The short stories are of noticeable strength and freshness.

ILLUSTRATIONS. The Magazine will show its excellence in its illustrations. They will be more abundant and elaborate than ever. It is the intention of the publishers to represent the best work of the leading artists, and to promote and foster the most skilled methods of wood engraving.

SPECIAL NOTICE.—To enable readers to preserve the Magazine from the first number (January, 1887) the following inducements are offered: A year's subscription and the numbers for 1887, \$4 50. A year's subscription and the numbers for 1887, bound in two volumes, cloth gilt top, \$5 00.

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