



### The Family Circle.

"Home, Sweet Home."

#### A Fashionable Marriage.

II.

When Miss Parkhurst, daintily attired in pale blue, enters the drawing-room, she finds the Countess in conversation with a tall, dark man whom she rightly guesses to be the Earl of Windholm. Lady Strathmore greets her affably and introduces her to Geraldine's fiancé. Strenuously as her ladyship opposed the coming of her daughter's friend, and much as she would have liked to prevent it, still, having invited her, she acts as a lady would, and treats her as an honored guest.

Annie thinks Lord Windholm decidedly good-looking, though his expression is far from pleasant, and his eyes are cold and piercing. He makes a few commonplace remarks to her, in the middle of which Lord Strathmore enters, followed shortly by the butler, announcing dinner. The Earl of Strathmore is the very opposite of his stately wife, being a portly, good-tempered looking man, with hohest blue eyes and a weak, irresolute mouth. "Where is Geraldine?" he says, after greeting his son-in-law elect; "another of those tiresome headaches, eh?"

"I think she is quite well," the Countess answers coolly. "Geraldine never hurries herself in warm weather."

Lord Windholm smiles disagreeably, and mutters something about teaching her punctuality. At that moment she enters with a few words of apology for being late, and they repair to the dining-room. Another of Geraldine's habits in warm weather is to eat about sufficient to feed a canary, so that it is with a little sigh of relief she rises from the desert-table to follow her mother to the drawing-room. The long, low windows are open to admit every breath of air, but the heat is still oppressive. "Annie," says Lady Geraldine, looking intently at the sky, "is not that a little cloud over there? Surely there is promise of rain at last?"

"Yes, it will rain soon," replies Miss Parkhurst. "See, the curtains are moving. It is the first sign of a breeze we have had to-day."

The girls stand perfectly still, watching the clouds gathering. The heat becomes intense, the sky is black; then a great drop of rain falls, followed quickly by another, and another. In less than a minute a deluge is coming down. Lady Geraldine stands perfectly still, heedless that the rain is splashing on her from the plants and ferns in the window. Annie has wisely retired.

"Are you taking a shower-bath under novel circumstances?" asks Lord Windholm, coming up to his lady-love unnoticed by her.

She starts slightly. "Is it not refreshing! But how wet I am! I was so absorbed in watching the welcome shower that I did not feel its effects upon myself."

"When you have finished rain-gazing perhaps you will kindly favor us with a little music," continues Lord Windholm.

"I shall be delighted, when I have had my dress changed," And she is turning away, when her hand is seized by her lover.

"What have you been doing during my absence, Geraldine?"

"About the same as usual. Driving, riding, walking, reading, and sleeping. Have you any particular reason for asking?"

"No, except that you are pale and preoccupied. It vexes me to see you looking white and thin."

"That is a pity, as I certainly have a predisposition that way. It is a comfort to think one can resort to art if nature proves fickle. By such assistance I may be able yet to maintain your dignity, Guy."

"Do not be sarcastic; I am quite satisfied with you," returned Lord Windholm. "There are only one or two little things I should like to alter."

Lady Geraldine makes a little mocking bow of pretended humility, and quits the room.

The church of St. Nicholas is thronged from the pulpit to the door as early as ten o'clock on the morning of the marriage of Lady Geraldine Treherne to the Earl of Windholm. The day was announced in most of the fashionable papers, and a vast number of persons are collected to see the wedding of the beauty of three seasons. Admission to the body of the church is granted only to the lucky possessors of tickets, but at last even these have to be turned away, as the church is full.

Gathered round the altar are the wedding guests, a goodly number of the highest members of the aristocracy, chatting and buzzing in undertones while they wait for the bride. The eight bridesmaids, in shimmering dresses of ruby and cream color—an elegant Parisian compound—hover near the door. Presently there is a little stir. A gentleman advances and makes a sign to Lord Strathmore, who hastens down the aisle to the church door, where a carriage has just stopped. Lady Geraldine, followed by the Countess, steps out, takes her father's arm and walks slowly up the aisle amid a hushed murmur of admiring excitement. She wears the regulation white satin and orange blossom, and the exquisite lace veil covering all is fastened with a large diamond star.

Very pale, very beautiful, perfectly collected, is the fair bride. She does not betray the least nervousness through the whole of the ceremony, and when it is ended, and she walks through the crowds of people, leaning on her husband's arm, with the strains of the "Wedding March" rolling through the church, she acknowledges the raised hats of the men by a slight bow and smile. Many a fair girl followed her with admiring, envious eyes. What more could earth hold for her? Young, rich, beautiful; married to a man of fashion, and an Earl; surely she had all that heart could desire. Who would not envy her bright fate? Ah, who indeed?

The breakfast is over; the last health has been drunk, and Lady Geraldine rises to go and change her dress. In half an hour she and her husband will leave the house. They are

going to spend the honeymoon in Yorkshire, where Lord Windholm has an estate. In her dressing-room Lady Geraldine finds her maid.

"Annette," she says, quietly, "go out and leave me quite alone for five minutes, then you may return. Do not allow any one to disturb me—not even the Countess."

"Very well, my lady," replies the well-trained servant.

At the end of the five minutes she returns, and sees Lady Geraldine lying in a heap by her davenport, which is open. For a moment Annette is paralyzed with terror, but being a sensible girl, she does not rush out of the room and scream, but quietly raises the lifeless form. Her own face blanches when she sees a tiny stream of crimson on the rich satin dress. Has Lady Geraldine broken a blood-vessel? She chafes the cold hand, and applies strong scent to the marble forehead. With all her efforts it is quite five minutes before the eyes open and Lady Geraldine gives a shuddering sigh. "Thank Heaven!" ejaculates the girl devoutly. "Are you better, my lady?"

"Yes, what is it? Did I faint?" and the young lady tries to rise. Then, catching sight of the blood on her dress, she says: "Ah, I remember; I went to my desk for something, when I felt dizzy and fell."

"But the blood, my lady?"

"Yes. I ruptured a tiny vessel a few years ago, and if I am over excited or fatigued the blood comes from my mouth."

"You will not be able to go out," says the girl.

"Nonsense, Annette; you must dress me at once. But first I must have some wine; I feel so weak. Go and get some, and mind you tell no one of this."

"But, my lady—" the girl expostulates.

"Annette, I wish it I ask you as a particular favor not to mention my faintness; I don't wish to alarm them unnecessarily. Fetch the wine and then come and dress me quickly."

Annette obeys unwillingly. When she returns the davenport is closed and Lady Geraldine divested of her dress. The wine and the exertion of a hurried toilet bring back a little life into the bride's white face. As she makes her adieu with calm, smiling ease, no one guesses how the sight of a withered flower has well nigh robbed her of life.

"Good-bye, Annie," she says, trying not to see the tears in her friend's eyes. "I shall want you to come and stay with me by and by. Think of me sometimes, dear, and write to me when you have time."

III.

"Who dines with us this evening, Geraldine?" asks Lord Windholm, without raising his eyes from the paper he is reading. His wife is engaged with her letters, so the question has to be repeated.

"No one, for a wonder. Neither have I arranged to go anywhere. It is more than a month since we have had a thoroughly quiet evening I feel sure."

"And very proper too. You know I object to 'quiet' evenings, and thoroughly dislike a tete-a-tete dinner. It was inconsiderate of you to arrange so badly."

"I don't know that I arranged it at all; it is more an oversight than anything else. Personally I am rather glad, but I do not wish you to be victimized; you can dine at your club."

"Thank you, but I have no intention of doing so. I shall dine at home."

"Very well," answers Geraldine good-humoredly, "and if you will not be bored I will sing you some new songs I have."

To this Lord Windholm makes no reply, so Geraldine returns to her letters. These occupy her until breakfast is ended, and then she goes to prepare for her ride with Lord Windholm.

They ride together every day, and sometimes it is the only hour in the twenty-four Geraldine spends with her husband. He is very particular about this; whether from pride in his wife's horsemanship or because it gratifies him to see the universal admiration her beauty creates. Geraldine does not seek to analyse; she is quite indifferent upon the point.

It is a beautiful June morning, bright and sunny, but not overpoweringly hot. The park is crowded with equestrians and pedestrians, and also a good sprinkling of carriages. The fair young Countess of Windholm is queen of the present season as she was of the last. She is at her best on horseback. The exercise brings a wild-rose tint to her usually white face and a brighter light to her eyes.

The graceful curves of her slight figure bear well the severe outline of a habit, while the plain round hat, guileless of a veil, cannot in the least detract from the beauty of the high bred, patrician face. The young Countess is thought cold and haughty by many, especially her own sex. Yet none can deny that her manner is pleasant and agreeable, and her conversation kind and affable. But she has no dear "bosom-friend" in whom to confide all her secrets. Pleasant to all her numerous acquaintances, she makes a friend of none, for which she is censured. But few care to neglect the Countess of Windholm. Her high birth and connections, her wealth, position, and popularity, make her a person to be sought after. Through bows and smiles the Earl and Countess return to Prince's Gate. Lady Windholm goes to her room and her husband to his club. Late in the afternoon the former drives alone, returning only in time for dinner.

Dinner is over, and Lady Windholm sits in the drawing-room alone. She holds a book in her lap, but presently it falls to the floor—she is asleep. The clear, soft light falls on her upturned face as her head reclines on the satin cushion. There is very little difference from the Geraldine of a year ago, except that she is sligher, and there are weary little lines round the lovely mouth. In her sleep the pretty red lips quiver slightly. She sleeps quietly on. The great house is perfectly quiet, and the air of the room sleep inducing with the redolence of japonica and white roses.

With a start Lady Windholm awakes presently, smiling to think in what an unusual way she has passed a couple of hours. She wonders where her husband is. Had he come in while she was asleep and left without disturbing her? "Scarcely," thinks Geraldine, as she seats herself at the piano.

After playing one or two things in a dreamy, sleepy way, she rises and goes to the dining-room. It is empty. She is about to return, feeling sure her husband has gone out, when she remembers he may be in the smoking-room. Thither she goes, her silk train making a slight rustle as it trails along the broad passages. Her hand is almost on the door, when it is opened from the inside, and her husband's valet appears, with a red, embarrassed face. He tries to ignore Lady Geraldine's intention of entering the room by attempting to close the door after coming out, but the lady's soft voice arrests him.

"Stay, Parsons. I am going in. Is Lord Windholm there?"

"Yes, my lady," answers the man with hesitation; "but—"

he—is not very well. I think, my lady, you might disturb him by going in."

"Allow me to pass," is all Lady Geraldine says, and Parsons draws back immediately.

The Earl of Windholm is lying full length on a lounge, his face pale and his eyes bloodshot. He mutters incoherently as his wife enters, and then closes his eyes and falls asleep immediately. No need to ask the nature of his lordship's illness. Geraldine has known all along of the unhappy vice to which her husband gives way, but it is the first time she has seen him under its influence. With a white, haggard face she quits the room, and the sight has done more than shock her.

(To be continued.)

### Uncle Tom's Department.

MY DEAR NEPHEWS AND NIECES.—I have just gone through my great budget of letters from all my children for another month; but I have not heard from so many as usual, in consequence, I presume, of the puzzles being a little harder, for I am reminded in most of the letters "that the puzzles were awful hard." Now, you must not give up in that way, but persevere and you'll succeed. Some one asks for a story, so I will give you one. Many boys and girls may have heard these words: "Hay-foot, straw-foot," but very few young folks—or old ones either—know how the terms originated. During the war of 1812, there was a great deal of drilling and training among the militia-men all over the country, especially in the large cities and towns where the principal recruiting stations were situated. Many of these would-be soldiers were from the lower classes of the country, and these of course knew nothing at all about marching in military fashion. They could walk far enough, some of them, and work as hard and bear as much fatigue as any soldier in a regular army; but they walked as they pleased, and had no idea about such a thing as keeping step. It is even said that there were fellows among them who did not know their right foot from their left, and who were therefore continually getting themselves and their companions into disorder by mixing up their legs, that is, moving out their right leg when the officer who was drilling them called out "left," and the other leg when he called out "right." To make these men understand exactly which leg was meant when the officer gave his orders, a curious plan was devised. Around the right leg of every man, just below the knee, was tied a wisp of hay, while a wisp of straw was tied around his left leg. Now, these country fellows knew very well the difference between hay and straw, and so when ranged in line and the officer gave the word to march, and called out, "Hay-foot! Straw-foot! Hay-foot! Straw-foot!" each one of them knew exactly which foot he must put forward. The regular soldier who may have been drilling at the same time probably smiled, if they did not dare to laugh, at those queer-looking men with their hay and straw bound legs, but the fathers and sisters of the recruits, if any of them chanced to come to town to see their sons or brothers drill, doubtless thought the affair a fine military display, and that Jeremiah or Caleb would be a General yet, if the war lasted long enough. The prize for the illustrated rebus is given to Louie Meston, of Griffin's Corners P. O., Ont.

UNCLE TOM.

#### PUZZLES.

NO. 1—CHARADE.

My first doth oft with marshal voice arouse the peaceful mind, and nights and warriors issue forth to follow his command; my second never cuts his teeth, yet they can cut I know; a city on the continent my whole will to you show.

E. E. RYAN.

NO. 2.—RIDDLE.

My first and my last are the same, My second and my fourth are the same, My third is five times my second, My whole pertains to a city.

A. J. TAYLOR.