

"Flatterers"
—OR—
The Shadow of the Future.

CHAPTER XX.
LADY COMYNGHAM AND MRS. ALWYN UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER.

"Oh, really!" said Lady Comyngham, upright and about as yielding as a post. "And pray, Mrs. Alwyn, what is it you wish us sisters to set right?" Unpromising, this; but Mrs. Alwyn rallied her forces round Mr. Duvesne's many remembered attentions, and pushed on.

"Your son has been our frequent guest, Lady Comyngham, as you are aware."

"Your guest, I believe, Mrs. Alwyn, some five or six times during the past year. I have begged him often not to intrude. He has told me he found it difficult to decline your frequent invitations."

"We are most delighted to see him, dear Lady Comyngham." ("Why so often 'dear'?" thought the countess, getting restless.) "Only too delighted. Had you been with him you would— you must, I believe, have put the same construction on his visits as we did."

"The construction I should have put," said the countess, in a very business-like manner, for she saw now what impended, and resolved to nip it in the bud, if practicable, "would have been that you made much of my son, and that, consequently, he related your entertainment, Edward always liked ladies' society. Young clerics enjoy that sort of thing. But I am sorry he imposed himself on you so much."

"Sorry! Oh, we need not be that if all ends well!" said Mrs. Alwyn, her handkerchief at play again. "I assure you we felt him, we treated him, as one of ourselves." ("The countess had some ado to repress an indignant interjection. He consulted us continuously all connected with his new house. He took my dearest Leonora's opinion on every arrangement. What could I think but that he desired to—")

"Get his rectory as pretty as possible for his wife!" ("The countess had made up her mind that the sooner further confession stopped the better.")

"And you were right, Mrs. Alwyn. That is my son's aim. He gave you, I fancy, since you showed such politeness to him, many hints on the subject. More than were wise. For only within the last month has he been at liberty to speak out—"

"That," interposed Mrs. Alwyn, "is why I came."

"And say that for years he has been engaged to a daughter of General Lermitt." ("Poor Mrs. Alwyn's eyes beamed, tingled with her start.") "They are just returning from India, and my son is at Southampton, waiting to meet Miss Lermitt, whom he is to marry next month. The general is peculiar, and begged no engagement should be made public till close on

their return. Of course we had to respect his wishes. Dear me, how warm this room is!" walking off without a glance at her listener, to fling a window open. "There, that makes it better."

Mrs. Alwyn wanted sir. A chagrin, intensely real, displaced her well-acted smiles and sentimentalism. Mortification high choked her. As for that ill-dressed earl's wife so loftily ignoring her semi-confession—fool that she had been to make it!—if fate ever gave her the chance of repaying the slight, shouldn't that debt be wiped out with compound interest? There was battle within her bosom to fetch a syllable of decent courtesy to her twitching lips. But after brief silence she contrived to say, with emphasis as little bitter as might be, for acquaintance with the nobility must not be lightly resigned: "I regret that Mr. Edward Duvesne gave us no chance of congratulating him earlier. Of course we do so now—"

"Much obliged," said the countess, frostily.

"And beyond this I say no more. It is useless to dwell on the—unfortunate—concealment he adopted."

"Kindly remember," said the countess, nettled, "his reticence was not his choice. We Comynghams are not secretive, whatever our faults. This concealment was purely unavoidable."

Mrs. Alwyn felt as though, if denied retort, she must die of spleen. Rashedly she answered: "Unavoidable! Possibly. Some people might—I don't say I do—consider it dishonorable."

It is dangerous to attack a woman's son. Lady Comyngham swiftly brought an unexpected weapon to the front. Drawing her inches to their fullest height, and looking from top to toe the countess, spite of her tumbled mantles gowns—

"Mrs. Alwyn," she said, "according to what I hear through my friend, Lady Wynne, in Worcester-shire, you can scarcely claim to be an acceptable critic on what is or what is not honorable. Allow me"—her fingers on the bell—"to wish you good day."

Cowed out of ready speech for once, John Alwyn's clever widow was in another minute gone from Oakleigh Place, never to return.

"Give me a fan!" cried Lady Comyngham to her reappearing daughters. "Open all the windows. That woman has poisoned the place with frangipane. I hate frangipane. I'm afraid I hate her. By her own showing, girls, she lured Edward to her house, and had the effrontery to imagine she had secured him for her daughter Leonora! I told Edward he was foolish to praise Miss Villiers' complexion, even before me. He said it was like Mary's, so he couldn't help the compliment. This is what comes of it. Your father is right; we must draw the line closer. From this day forth, that woman from the Dale goes off our list."

The countess need not have troubled to make this amendment. The "woman from the Dale" speedily betook herself beyond the range of the most noble Comyngham circle.

From that day's disastrous drive Mrs. Alwyn went home so exasperated with this fresh stroke of ungracious fortune that, had she been a South Sea Islander, badgering her blessings out of a wooden idol, the probability is, in her last access of downright rage, she would have had that idol off its pedestal and thrashed it soundly for its baneful contrariness. Denied that consolation, she took the best that circumstances permitted. Leonora, her vanity smarting most poignantly, was only too ready to quit the scene of her unsuccessful youth. Preparations for lengthened absence were hastily made. A stack of cards, post-privilege made, went forth by post; and almost as soon as these reached their destinations, the senders were gone from the dwelling they had graced so many years.

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Later, Mr. Russell and railway-vans put in an appearance. The Dale was dismantled. From the earl's agent it eked out that the property was in process of purchase for the Comynghams, negotiations being carried on through the late owner's brother. Having long before risen on the village, from no one knew where, they disappeared none could tell whither, but henceforth St. Clair's knew nothing more of stately Mrs. Alwyn and her handsome daughter, Miss Villiers.

CHAPTER XXI.
IN WHICH MR. HURST MAKES AN AWKWARD DISCOVERY.

At the end of the month Miss Hurst conceived it her duty to inquire whether Miss Gray found her residence at Wynstone sufficiently satisfactory to hold out hope of its being prolonged.

"Plainly," said Sydney, smiling, though she felt none so jubilant. "Do I like my place? Yes, I have no wish to leave it, if I suit my mistress."

She faltered over that bit of bravado. Now an when came a day when it was almost to keep a happy breeding. Such a wrench of old ties as Sydney had achieved is not allowed by Madam Nature to sink into the great past to the beat of an ever-placid pulse. There were times when the girl born to, at least, moderate wealth, felt prisoned in the small house at Capel Moor, with its prim furnishing and garniture, when the sense of having no other claimable shelter appalled her. A panic of this sort was on her to-day, which had brought her tidings that her mother and Leonora were leaving England for months, and her isolation seemed complete; when in her hand she held the coins that represented thirty days' hire, and felt staggered at the fact that she was in humbly paid service.

But she was sorry for her utterance when she saw Miss Hurst took it as complaint. "Mistress!" the lady repeated, reproachfully. "Now, Miss Grey, is it fair to use a word that insinuates that I have given myself airs when I've been so careful to speak of you as a friend who found it convenient to share our home; and I'm sure I would always treat you as such. I wouldn't even let Mrs. Preece, the other day, call you my companion, for I said, 'No lady's companion always reminds me of those nasty little work cases, with scissors too small to get your thumb in, and thimble too large, and nothing fits anything, and that's the very reverse of Miss Grey.' But if it's as a mistress you regard me, why, I should be sorry to detain you in a situation which, of course, I can see is far beneath you."

Sydney grew repentant as this speech proceeded. "Dear Miss Hurst," she said, "please forgive me. It sounded ungrateful, but I did not mean to be so. I am thankful to be here, and I am not likely to go till you send me away."

"Which won't be in a hurry, then," said Miss Hurst, as easily mollified as moved, "and as for being down sometimes, why, every one is that. I am. I have things to grudge over that won't bear looking back on. Perhaps you have the same. Very likely, as you are younger, things seem harder; though, indeed, Miss Grey, neither the teens nor the twenties have a monopoly of very tender sorrows. Ah—"

A deep sigh courted invitation to confidential disclosures, but Sydney, conscious that her own story must remain sealed, kept silence, with a blush so deep that Miss Hurst drew therefrom her own conclusions, and with self-denial carried the conversation to other channels.

(To be continued)

Mushrooms are delicious when frizzled in butter just as you would frizzle dried beef.

Provide yourself with a granite or porcelain-lined kettle and wooden spoons for pickling.

Cologne Cathedral.

Cologne Cathedral was built according to the designs of a mediæval architect, Meister Gerhard, who owed his inspiration to the Amiens where the architect lived and studied. No cathedral has had such a chequered history. For centuries the half-completed spire mocked the vision of the early master builders. Gerhard's original plans were removed for greater safety to a Benedictine monastery during the French occupation at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The monastery was broken up, and the forgotten and neglected designs came eventually into the possession of a private family, who used the great sheets of parchment for drying beans. Subsequently the son of the house went to Darmstadt for educational purposes. His anxious mother thought the young man's clothes would be kept clean and dry if his box were lined with the stout parchment sheets which had rendered useful service in the case of the beans. The youth took up his residence in Darmstadt at the Gasthaus zur Traube. Internal evidence shows that, once away from the vigilant maternal eye, the care of his clothes must have suffered. The coverings intended to protect his garments from dust and damp were cast aside with youthful flippancy.

The scrolls, still carrying their hidden treasure of the great design of the west end of the cathedral, were thrown away and consigned as litter to the loft of the inn. There they were discovered by a carpenter sufficiently intelligent to appreciate their importance. From his hands they passed into those of a painter, and eventually, after a journey via Paris, were returned to Cologne. They hang to-day in a chapel of the choir.

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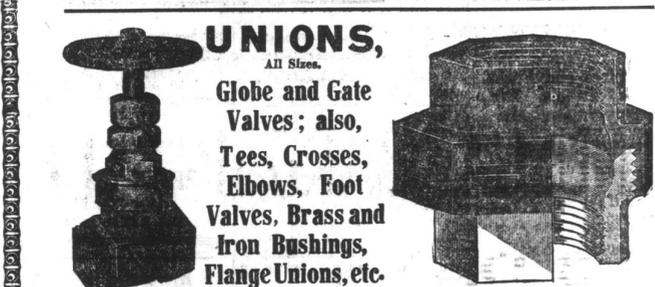
And don't forget Libby's Hawaiian Pineapple—genuine sun-ripened fruit, packed before sundown on the day that it is picked, preserving all its native flavor and lusciousness.

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Mr. Kelley was accompanied by his wife (who has made many yachting cruises with her husband, a guest (Mr. Egmont Arens, of New York, who has had no previous sea experience), and a young Danish seaman (R. Oppler, who navigated the little craft). They encountered heavy gales, soon after starting on June 13th, and were driven about 250 miles south of their course. Afterwards the weather was magnificent. It took ten days to do the last 500 miles, on account of the light easterly breezes prevailing.

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