

# POOR DOCUMENT

6

QUEENS COUNTY GAZETTE, GAGETOWN, N. B., WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1899.

## Literature.

### All's Well That Ends Well.

"Then you won't come with me, May?" "Don't put it so disagreeably," Lady Haworth says, coaxingly. "It is not that I won't, you know, Fred, but merely that I do not feel inclined to go to Lady Lechmore's with you. I have a bad headache."

"So you had the last evening we were invited to Lechmore House?" "Ah, but that was a real headache!" May answers, naively. "But—"

"The one from which you are suffering to-night is evidently ordered for the occasion!"

"Not quite," May says, forcing a smile. "I really shall have a headache if you speak to me again in that tone."

But Sir Frederick does not seem much inclined to barter; there is a heavy frown on the handsome face, and a look of pain in his dark gray eyes, which make his young wife's voice falter when she addresses him, and the little hand she lays upon his arm is unsteady.

"Don't be vexed, my darling!" she whispers, softly. "It is not disagreeable. It will be a very stupid party, Fred, and I should be bored! Make any excuse for me you like, as you think you ought to go, and I will stay up for you, and we can have a chat when you come back—What! still cross, dear?" she adds, trying to speak gaily.

"I think I have some reason, May!" he answers, gravely. "This is the second time that you have refused to accompany me to Lechmore House, and Lady Lechmore may justly be annoyed at your absence."

"But I really meant to go, Fred. I should like to have gone with you," she said, earnestly, "but—"

"Surely your head is not so bad that it need prevent your spending an hour at Lechmore House. You can go in that dress, cannot you?"

Lady Haworth glances down at her pretty dinner-dress with a smile.

"Not exactly," she says, carelessly. "But that need not matter, for I am not going, Fred."

"You have quite made up your mind?" he said, coldly, shaking off her hand with a little anger. "You will not come?" "I do not quite see that I am bound to make a martyr of myself to please Lady Lechmore," Lady Haworth answers, pettishly.

"It is not to please Lady Lechmore," he says, quickly; "it is to please me! Come, little wife, be reasonable," he adds, taking her into his strong arms. "Go and dress, if you think it necessary, but indeed you look pretty enough for anything as you are."

"Don't insist, Fred," she said, wistfully; "I do not like to refuse you, but, indeed," resting her head wearily upon his shoulder, "I do not feel up to it tonight, and you know that I never cared for Lady Lechmore."

"Nonsense!" Sir Frederick's patience is evidently coming to an end, and his voice is sufficiently sharp to startle May considerably. "I insist upon your going! Your headache is but a pretext, and it is one which will not satisfy me! If you have any other motive for refusing to accompany me, say so frankly. I can excuse anything but a deception!"

Every shade of color faded from Lady Haworth's cheeks and lips. Never during the two years and a half of their wedded life had her husband spoken to her in that tone, and never has she seen that angry glitter in his eyes when they are turned upon her.

Startled and greatly moved, she turns almost mechanically to the door, and makes a few steps toward it, but she is trembling so violently that she is obliged to stop midway and catch at the back of a chair for support.

But Sir Frederick cannot see the pallor of her face, for her back is turned toward him, and he misinterprets the movement.

"Did you understand that I ordered you to go?" he says, sternly.

"Yes," she replies, very quietly.

"And you will go?"

"No."

The little monosyllable is the only word she can force her lips to utter, and during the silence which follows it seems as if the beating of "her own heart" were the only sound she heard.

"No!" he repeats, slowly. Then without softening his stern voice, he adds, "What am I to conclude from this, May? Do you consider yourself free from the yoke you made at your marriage?"

"Fred!"

The name breaks from the pale, parted lips like a cry of pain, and she runs toward him, holding out her hands in earnest entreaty.

"Fred, my dearest, don't be angry! Forgive me for disobeying you, but I cannot—I cannot go to-night!"

"This is childish!" Sir Frederick says, impatiently. "You must have some reason for such a persistent refusal. May, he continues, harshly, laying his hand upon her shoulder. "Are you deceiving me? You know that I can forgive anything but that. Have you any special reason for staying at home to-night?"

"There is a moment's pause, during which May Haworth's sweet eyes glisten in an earnest appeal to her husband's face, which is grave, and stern and harsh.

"No," she replies; then, before he has

time to speak, she goes on, half petulantly, half pleadingly. "How is it possible for me to go now? You have made me so nervous that I feel quite hysterical, and I should only break down altogether if you drag me into a hot room to smile and chatter to people for whom I don't care a jot!"

"Another excuse," he says, haughtily, as he turns away from her, and without another glance at the fair, agitated face, he leaves the room, and in two minutes after May hears the sounds of the carriage wheels driving rapidly away.

Heavy-hearted as her little ladyship feels, she does not follow her first inclination and throw herself upon a sofa to find relief in a good fit of crying. Two great hot tears well up in the pretty eyes and roll down the pale cheek, but no more fall.

May mechanically clucks back her eyes, and picks up her pocket-handkerchief with an air of decision.

"It is our first quarrel," she says, softly, "and it will not be difficult to win my pardon when he comes home. He will forgive me anything—anything," she breaks off, and the smile dies away.

"Anything but deceit," she resumes again in a moment. "And he must never know. Oh, if I only had had courage what it would have saved me! What anxiety—what terror—what humiliation!"

She began to pace rapidly up and down the pretty drawing-room, clasping and unclasping her hands in her agitation, while the color comes and goes in her beautiful, earnest face.

"And I was so sorry, so very sorry to vex him," she goes on in a moment, speaking half aloud in her restless agitation. "I was so grieved to see the pain as well as anger on his face. My darling! He is always so good to me, and so patient with me. But after this evening I will never vex him again. There will be no need. I shall be safe then."

Even as she speaks a little timepiece on a mantel near her chimes out ten silver strokes, and Lady Haworth starts violently at the sound; then she throws a glance round the room as if she is afraid that there is some unknown presence watching her.

"For a moment only, then her terror seems to pass away, for she laughs a little—not a very musical laugh, nor a very merry one—and taking out a letter from the pocket of her dress, she reads it attentively.

"Half-past ten o'clock," she says, meditatively. "It is the grounds. It was just a little unreasonable of him; he might have let me send it by post; but, however, it will only be for a few minutes, and then I shall be free. Ah! how bitterly I have repented my disobedience! How wrong it was of me—how very, very wrong!"

Once more the sweet lips begin to quiver, but once more Lady Haworth conquers her emotion, and crossing over to the mantelpiece, looks the letter to the flame of the candle until it is reduced to ashes, then she goes over to the French window, and opening it, looks out into the quiet grounds.

It is a fine summer night, with a dark blue starlight sky, and a soft, flower-scented breeze moving among the plants in the flower-garden and the trees in the shrubbery.

All is very still and quiet both in the grounds and in the house. The household were sleeping peacefully, and there was no one to wonder why her ladyship was leaving the house alone at that time of night, looking, too, so pale and nervous as she passed out of the drawing room into the quiet starlit night.

Lady Lechmore's drawing room presents a gay and animated appearance when Sir Frederick Haworth enters them, but he is far too preoccupied and unhappy to take much heed of their brilliancy; and the look of pain had deepened in his eyes when, having excused his wife to his hostess, who received the excuses with smiling concern and the slightest uplifting of her delicately penciled eyebrows, he mingles with the guests who throng the gaily lighted salons.

It is the first serious disagreement he has had with his wife during their married life, and he feels it keenly, all the more because he cannot help suspecting that she must have had some reason for refusing to accompany him other than the headache which was her ostensible excuse.

She is generally so unselfish, so self-denying, so heedless of her own wishes, but so careful to meet his in every way, that it seems strange beyond all things to think that she would thwart him in this matter, which, though it was trifling in itself, had been magnified by the earnestness of his desire that she should go with him.

Strive as he may, he cannot forget that unlucky quarrel. He had lost his temper, certainly, but he had had good reason. She had seemed well enough all through dinner—a little pale perhaps; but then she was often pale, and had never been of the dairy-maid order of beauty. And it was only when he had mentioned Lady Lechmore's soiree that she had complained of a headache. She had started a little, he remembered, and had seemed confused. Oh, surely there was some mystery!

And yet May is so good, and true, and sweet!

It seems base indeed to suspect her even for a moment. She loves him deeply and truly, and she has always proved her love for him by her care and tenderness.

And then his thoughts go back to the past, to the first time he had seen her at her father's house, when his heart had seemed to pass from his own keeping into hers, and he had felt that there could be no happiness in his future life if she did not share it; and as he thinks thus the bitterness of his anger against her dies away, and his heart softens toward her; and if she were anywhere near him then he would have told her that he was in the wrong to insist on her obedience in such a trifle, and he would win her forgiveness—dear, gentle heart!

What is she doing now? he wonders, dreamily, listening to the music and keeping up a desultory conversation between the pieces and songs with a pretty little dark-eyed woman, who is thinking that Sir Frederick, handsome as he is, is a very uninteresting companion. Is she grieving at the misunderstanding? Is she fretting at the misapprehension? How big and beautiful her eyes looked with the tears standing in them. It is a long, long time since he saw tears in her eyes, he thinks, and a sad thought follows the thought, a thought that he will never again bring them there if he can help it—his pretty, gentle, loving wife! At any rate, he need keep her no longer in pain or distress—he will go home at once, and they will make up their difference and enjoy that reconciliation which the poet calls "the feast of love!"

Just as he is making his way toward the door, having exchanged a few words of farewell with his hostess, and begging him to excuse such an early departure to her ladyship, someone at the piano begins to sing. The voice is a beautiful one—a tenor of surpassing sweetness, and very highly cultivated, and its beauty tempts Sir Francis to wait for the song.

Standing near the door he listens attentively, and the words, familiar as they are, strike him, and bring a pain to his heart—a strange undefinable ache.

"In love, if love be love, if love be true, Faith and unfaith can never be equal partners; Unfaith is sought in want of faith in all."

"It is the little rift within the lute, That by-and-by will make the music mute, And ever widening, slowly silence all."

"The little rift within the lute, Or little pitted apple in garret's fruit, That rotting inward slowly moulder all."

"It is not worth the keeping—let it go; But shall it! Answer, darling, answer no. And trust me not at all or all in all."

The song ceases, the rich, soft notes die away, and with the words still lingering in his ears, Sir Frederick leaves the brilliant throng.

There is no delay in finding the brocade, and Sir Frederick thrusts himself back upon the cushions, and gives the order "Home," with some pleasure at the surprise he will give May by his early return, and a feeling of almost boyish exultation at the thought of the reconciliation.

Ten minutes suffice to bring him home; the carriage is driven round to the stables, and Sir Frederick, instead of entering by the hall-door, which the footman holds open so obligingly, goes round through the flower-garden to the drawing-room window, anxious to render the surprise more complete.

But instead of surprising, there is a surprise in store for him! The window is open, and the drawing-room is untenanted.

The waxlights burning softly in the pretty room show that Lady Haworth has not retired to rest, but Sir Frederick glances around in vain expectation of seeing the graceful, slender figure, and the fair face of his young wife.

He enters the room, slowly, a sense of disappointment creeping over him as a nearer inspection proves it to be empty, and he stands for a moment or two wondering a little.

Perhaps she has gone up to the nursery for a few minutes, he thinks presently, to see the little son of whom she is so proud and fond; and he throws himself into the chair in which she had been sitting, and waits with as much patience as he can muster for her reappearance.

Five minutes pass away, then ten, and Sir Frederick's small amount of patience is exhausted.

He goes up to the nursery, but little Fred is fast asleep, and the nurse tells him that his ladyship has not been upstairs that evening. Neither is she in her own room, for he looks in her boudoir and in her dressing-room, then returns rather disconsolately to the drawing-room.

He has hardly been in the room five seconds, when the open window makes him start and laugh slightly.

"Of course she is gone out into the grounds for a breath of fresh air," he says, half aloud. "Imprudent girl! I daresay she has not even put a shawl on."

He crosses the room, and steps out on to the terrace leading down to the flower-garden and pleasure. There is no one to sight, and he strolls on, wondering where May can have concealed herself.

Probably she wanted to give him a surprise as he had wished to astonish her, and hearing the carriage, had darted away.

He goes on slowly, when suddenly, as he turns into a covered walk leading to the shrubbery, he catches sight of two figures standing at the end.

There is not sufficient light to distinguish their features, but he sees that they are of opposite sexes, and that the woman wears a trailing white gown such as his wife had worn that evening, and that the man is enveloped in a large cloak, which is thrown around him in a quaint foreign fashion.

Sir Frederick's heart seems to stand still in a sudden fear; then it begins to beat furiously, and for a moment he cannot move; then he walks rapidly towards them.

He sees that two faces are turned towards him in swift, startled surprise, and that something—a small parcel or a letter—is passed from one hand to the other; then the man rushes away, and is lost in the thick darkness of the shrubbery; and Sir Frederick hurries forward, his passage

is barred by his wife, who, white and trembling and terribly agitated, throws herself upon his breast, clinging to him with unsteady, clasping hands, and uttering little cries of terror and entreaty.

(To Be Continued.)

### Absent Mindedness.

"Charlie Youngpop's body is beginning to talk now."

"Has Charlie begun boring you with stories about it?"

"No, but I sat near him at the lunch-counter to-day and I heard him say absent-mindedly to the waiter girl, 'Dim me a jinky water please.'"

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