

above all other women you were calculated to brighten a man's heart and his home. You were holding a spray of mignonette in your hands, telling me how fragrant it was, and inventing all kinds of pretty fancies in connection with it. Ulric came in—you remember?"

She bent her head and her face flushed.

"I do remember," she assented, shyly.

"He saw the mignonette in your hands, and bent forward to look at it. 'It is the sweetest flower that blows,' he said. 'The cold mask in a moment fell over your face, and I saw you—mind, I saw you—throw the pretty spray away as though it had stung you.'"

She clasped her white hands with a pretty air of penitence.

"It was very wrong, Raoul, I know; I have no excuse."

"Then Ulric, in his turn, said something about 'ladies' airs' which you did not like. You swept out of the room; and the next time you met neither of you spoke."

"How closely you have observed me!" she said, with a hot flush on her face.

"Because I love both you and Ulric so dearly," he replied. "Now for my illustration, Hildred. Suppose that, instead of throwing away the flower that he liked, you had looked up into his face and said something gay or graceful or pretty; he would have returned a smiling answer, and all would have been well; and the next time you met he would have been even more smiling and you more kind."

"But, Raoul," she asked, "would that have been sincere? I do not feel kind or pleased—is it sincere to affect to be so?"

"You ought to feel kind—he is your own husband. All that I can say is that you should try to feel so, whether you do or not. Now begin this very day; throw off that stony mask forever. How is he to know what a tender soul is hidden by that freezing face unless you give him some chance of finding out? Do not say to yourself that you will begin to-morrow or the day after—begin at once. Say to yourself that you will win him."

"Is it not unwomanly to seek for love which is not offered to you, Raoul?"

"It might be in a girl, it is not in a wife. I think a wife should aspire to win her husband, to make him love her with all his heart."

"Lord Caraven will never love me," she said. "I do not think that he has any heart to give; it is all wasted—he has had a hundred loves."

"But not one real one, Hildred. If you win his heart, take my word for it, you will be his first love. We will take our stand on something higher. To win love is pleasant, but you shall not devote your life to that. You shall devote yourself to the rousing of a soul, naturally noble, but long buried in self-indulgence and folly; you shall spend your life in making the Earl of Caraven worthy of the name he bears. You have promised."

"I promise again," she replied.

"Ah, child, you know but little, after all, of what you will have to encounter. But a true soldier never deserts his post; he dies doing his duty. You will have many sore humiliations, many bitter hours of annoyance, many a contest with your own pride, but you will win in the end—of that I am sure—and we shall begin our new life, Hildred, to-day."

She had clasped her hands together, and she looked at him with piteous entreaty.

"I wish," she said, "that you would tell me what to do first. I could go on if I only knew how to begin."

He smiled gravely.

"Perhaps you would think my first lesson a very hard one," he said.

"I will do what you tell me, Raoul, let it be what it may."

"Then I shall suggest this. You wish to make a little advance—nothing very marked, but some trifling act of civility that will make amends, and show your desire to be what children call 'friends.'"

He did not know what an effort it cost her to say "Yes," but she did say it, and she meant it.

"Then this is what I suggest. It was about a spray of mignonette you displeased Ulric last. Gather some beautiful sprays of it, the finest you can obtain, and take them to him. Say quite carelessly, 'You admire mignonette, so I have brought you this.'"

"And suppose," said Hildred, "that he repays me in kind by throwing it away?"

"Never mind—courage and patience must be your watchwords. Ah, Hildred, after all, our likes and dislikes should have little to do with our duties. You will not be alone in your struggles; I shall watch over you, I shall help you, and sympathy is sweet."

She caught his hand and kissed it. He saw her face clear, and a bright earnest light shine in her eyes.

"Do you know, Raoul," she said, "that I feel happier even now before I have begun. I did not like the thought of running away; there was something very cowardly about it. Now I shall never think of it again. I shall endure to the very end. I am happier even for the resolve. I have something to live for—"

"Something to live for, life to begin;
Something to fight for, something to win."

I must be more patient than patience itself. I must be humble; all vanity and self-esteem must leave me before I begin the task that you have set me. I must rise from the commonplace to the heroic, and say to myself, it is for the good of a human soul."

"Hildred, you do not know how often I have longed to speak to you about this," he remarked—"to help you, to advise you; and now that you have given me the privilege I shall not be slow to avail myself of it."

(To be continued.)



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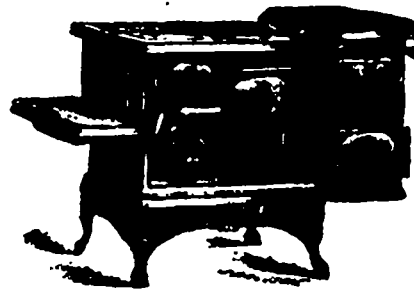
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