

LADY AYLMER.

CHAPTER VIII.—(CONTINUED.)

The crowd was gathering in numbers every moment, and was not only dense and strong, but curious. Lord Aylmer, however, without standing on ceremony, vigorously elbowed his way to the inner circle.

"Let me pass; stand aside. Policeman, I am Lord Aylmer—my horses were frightened by an infernal balloon that a child was carrying. Is she much worse?"

"Dead faint at present, my lord," replied the policeman, who had the woman's head up on his knees. "I wish we could get some brandy and some water."

Lord Aylmer looked round for Charles. "Charles, get some brandy and some water from somewhere or other. Be quick!"

Just then a well-dressed young woman pushed her way through the crowd. "Let me pass," she urged. "Can't you see I've brought brandy? Stand back, you men! Have you never seen an accident before? Do you want to kill her? Stand back!"

She was a handsome woman, scarcely more than a girl; her hands and face and speech betokened that she was gently born, her fearless words, putting into words what was in her mind, had the effect of causing the crowd to shrink back a little. "Is she much hurt, poor thing?" she asked.

"Pretty bad case, miss," answered the policeman, who was trying to get a little brandy down the unconscious woman's throat.

"Haden't you better get her into my house? She can't lie here," she went on. "Has any one gone for a doctor?"

"I should get her off to the hospital at once, miss," the policeman replied.

"Would you? Poor thing! I was standing at my window and saw it all. You oughtn't to let your coachman drive like that," she added, severely, to Lord Aylmer.

"I don't; but my horses were frightened by a child's balloon," he explained.

"You oughtn't to have horses that are frightened at trifles," she responded illogically.

"I think we better get her off at once," said the policeman; "she gives no signs of coming round."

"How can we take her? Shall I? I have the carriage here ready, and the horses are sober enough now."

"Yes, my lord, I really think that's the best thing we can do," the other answered. "If your man'll give me a hand we'll lift her in a minute."

Eventually the woman was lifted into the victoria, and the energetic young woman having rushed back to her house for her hat, got in also, and supported her in as comfortable a position as was compatible with her insensible condition. Just as they were starting, a doctor arrived on the scene, took a hasty glance at the victim of the accident, and quietly got in, taking possession of the little back seat. "I'd better go—it's a bad business," he said to Lord Aylmer, realizing that he was owner of the carriage.

"Yes—yes—we had better follow in a cab," Lord Aylmer said, turning to the policeman. "I suppose you'll see this through."

"Oh, yes, my lord! I'm bound to do that," he answered.

Lord Aylmer was getting more and more nervous; he got into the cab looking white and scared, with his sinful old heart thumping against his ribs in a way that was very unusual with him. Not because the carriage had run over an elderly woman and it was likely to prove a fatal accident, not for that reason at all, but wholly and solely because, when Charles and the policeman had lifted the unconscious woman into the carriage, Lord Aylmer had picked up a letter which was lying face upward in the roadway just where she had laid. Short-sightedness was not one of Lord Aylmer's signs of approaching years, and in an instant he had grasped that the letter was addressed to his nephew Dick, and before Charles and the policeman had got their burden safely into the victoria, he had thrust the letter into his pocket, with a sort of impious thanksgiving to Heaven that at last the girl he had been hunting down for many weeks was delivered into his hand.

For evidently this respectable elderly woman, dressed in decent black, was Mrs. Harris's servant; and if it happened that she did not keep more than one—why, this accident would put her altogether at his mercy.

He was positively trembling when they reached the St. George's Hospital, and Barbara was carried in, not unconscious now, for the slight jolting of the carriage had brought her to again. Then there was a short time of impatient waiting before the doctor came to them—that is, Lord Aylmer and the young lady who had come with the patient.

"Broken leg," he said—"atad thing at her time of day. And she is worrying about her mistress—wants to send and break it gently—isn't in good health just now. Will you go?" turning to the young lady.

"I'm very sorry, but I'm due at rehearsal now—I must go off at once. Couldn't you go?" she asked, turning to Lord Aylmer.

"Certainly—with pleasure. Shall I bring her back to see the old lady?" Lord Aylmer inquired, in a tone which was a delightful mixture of gallantry and fatherliness—a tone which had, by the bye, stood him in good stead many a time and oft.

"Yes it would quiet her down a little, I daresay," the house surgeon answered.

"Very well. Make me liable for any expenses, you know," Lord Aylmer said, as he moved to tread the door. "Can I see you into a cab, my dear lady?" he added to the actress.

"Thanks," she answered.

"And may I have the honor of settling with the cabman?"

"Oh, no—very kind of you, but I always pay for myself. The Cornhill—good-by."

The cab rolled off, Lord Aylmer uncovered his handsome old head, smiled his most fascinating smile, and bowed with a profound air of respect, which was quite lost on the back of the retreating cab and its occupant. Then he got into his victoria and said: "Palace Mansions."

"Yes, m'lord," answered Charles, woodenly; then remarked to Barker, as soon as he hopped up on to the box; "Palace Mansions; even broken legs don't put 'em off."

"Seems so," said Barker, Barker's nerves were all shaken with the accident, and he would have given anything he possessed for a nip of brandy; he was not, therefore, very much inclined for conversation.

Meantime, as soon as they had reached Albert Gate, Lord Aylmer drew out the letter and looked at it with a grin of satisfaction on his wicked old face. "H'm! Richard Harris, Esq., care of Messrs. Brewster & Co., No 10 Grove street, Madras, India," he muttered. "Oh! so you have not cut the chains, Master Dick, you've not burned your boats behind you. What a fool you are, to be sure!"

He opened the letter without the smallest scruple, tore the envelope into a thousand fragments and scattered them to the winds, then settled down to enjoy the tender words beginning: "My own dear Dick," and ending: "Your loving and faithful little wife, Dorothy."

"So her name is Dorothy," he mused. "Strange that they should always lay such stress on their love and their faithfulness! They're all alike. I wonder who the Esther is that she talks about. Barbara is evidently the old girl who came to grief just now. Well, Barbara is safely laid up by the leg for the next few weeks. I easily could not have fallen out better if one had planned it all. But I wonder who Esther is? Esther hasn't come yet, she says, 'but may come at any moment.' I must find out, about Esther."

When they got to Palace Mansions, he saw Dorothy looking anxiously out of the window.

"On the watch," he said to himself, "and pretty uneasy, too."

The lovely face disappeared when the carriage drew up at the door, and the smart footman, in his glory of crimson and white, jumped down and opened the door for the handsome old gentleman, who got out and went into the building. He knocked at the door of No. 3, and Dorothy, being perfectly alone, had no choice but to go and open it.

"Am I speaking to Mrs. Harris?" said the suave, wicked, old voice.

"Yes," answered Dorothy, wondering what he could possibly want with her.

"May I come in? I am Lord Aylmer. I have something to tell you. No don't be alarmed; it is nothing very bad. Pray, don't alarm yourself."

At the mention of his name—and as the policeman and the doctor, the young lady who had gone to Barbara's aid, and the people at St. George's knew all about him it would, he knew, be useless to deceive Dorothy as to his identity, so he boldly gave his own name and trusted to the chance of her not knowing that he was anything to Dick—Dorothy started as if she had been shot, and at the hint of "some thing to tell" which instinct always tells us means bad news, she staggered back, and would probably have fallen if he had not caught her.

"I beg you will not frighten yourself like this," he cried. "Indeed, it is not so serious as that." Her lips could not utter Dick's name, her agony was so great; but her eyes spoke volumes in place of her tongue.

It never occurred to Lord Aylmer that she was thinking of Dick. He only thought how lovely she was in her distress, and wondered how he could best tell her the truth.

"The fact is," he said, blurring out the truth at last, "there has been an accident, and your old servant—"

"Barbara—is she hurt?" Dorothy cried in dismay.

"I am sorry to say that she is hurt. More sorry to be obliged to own that it was my own carriage which did the mischief. But won't you let me come in and tell you all about it? It is such a shame to keep you standing there."

"Oh, yes, of course. Forgive me, but I—that is, you have startled me, and I forgot that we were still here. Come in."

She turned and led the way to the little drawing-room. Suddenly there flashed across her mind the remembrance of the fact that a large portrait of Dick was standing on a little table near the fireplace. Quick as thought she walked straight to the table and turned the portrait face downward, carelessly throwing over it the pretty lace trifle which adorned the top of a little chair which stood close by.

She fluttered herself that the old lord had not seen or at any rate noticed the action, and turned to him eager to hear what had happened to Barbara.

"Tell me, is she much hurt?" she asked.

"My poor old Barbara! How was it?"

He told her then exactly how the accident had happened, and how they had taken the old lady (as he called Barbara, with an air of being himself quite a boy) off to St. George's, she being insensible and not able to tell them where she lived.

"To St. George's? Is that a hospital?" Dorothy cried. "Oh, my poor Barbara! She will think that the end of the world has come."

"Oh, no. She is much better off than she would be in any private house," said Lord Aylmer, soothingly. "But I am most grieved and sorry to tell you that her leg is broken, and she is naturally very anxious that you should hear of her, and, if possible, that she should see you."

"Oh, I'll go. I'll go at once," Dorothy cried. "Would you be kind enough to get me a cab? I won't lose another minute. Oh, my poor, dear old Barbara!"

He handed her into the carriage with an air of deference he might have shown to a princess, then he got in himself and sat beside her.

"Back to St. George's Hospital," he said to Charles.

"Yes, m'lord," said Charles.

And, as ill-luck would have it, at that very instant the lady with the serene eyes who lived on the floor above Dorothy's flat, came down the street in time to see them come out and the old gentleman hand

her into the carriage—nay, in time also to hear Charles's reply of "Yes, m'lord."

As if by instinct the two women looked at one another—there was no expression in the serene face of the lady who was on foot, nothing noticeable about her except a cold severity in her eyes; it was but the glance of a moment, yet Dorothy, who guessed what was in the mind of the other, grew scarlet from chin to brow, and turned her head away that Lord Aylmer might not see that her eyes were filled with tears.

"Will you be able to get on without your old servant?" Lord Aylmer asked, as they drove along.

"I must, for the present," answered Dorothy.

"If you could trust me to find out about it, I think I know just the very person," he said. "My valet's wife she is—an excellent cook and a very clever, capable servant in every way."

"But would she come?"

"I think so."

"But to a little flat like mine, with nobody to do anything but myself. I am afraid she is a person accustomed to a very large establishment."

"I think that will be all right. I will make it worth her while to come. No, don't look so, my dear Mrs. Harris; it will be only just and right that I should pay for your temporary domestic—it must be a frightful inconvenience, and of course it was my fault. If I hadn't been there the old lady wouldn't have come to grief."

"You are too good," murmured Dorothy gratefully.

So by the time they had reached the hospital, Dorothy had thought herself into quite a blissful frame of mind. She had built up a wonderful castle in the air, when Lord Aylmer should express a wish, "Oh, my dear, I do wish that you were my daughter!" when she should throw off her disguise and say, "I am the next thing to your daughter." "How?" "Why, I'm Dick's wife."

She was so engrossed in her dreams that she did not notice that they had reached their destination, until a smooth voice at her elbow said, "Now, dear lady."

Somehow the tone jarred on her dream, but her eyes were still radiant as she turned toward him. "I did not notice where we were," she said in a voice still tinged with the brightness of her dream.

"Happy thoughts," said he, as he helped her to the ground.

"Very happy ones," she answered, smiling.

They did not permit her to stay very long. Barbara was lying still, very faint and weak from the shock of the accident and the pain of her leg. She was worrying and anxious about her young mistress, and Dorothy hastened to reassure her.

For a little way Dorothy was silent.

"Poor old Barbara!" she burst out at length. "I don't believe she was ever ill in all her life before; at least, I never knew her to be ill, never."

She turned again to him. "How soon do you think the woman you spoke of will be able to come?" she asked.

"To-night, I hope," he replied. Any way I will go out and see her and let you know."

"But what a trouble for you?"

"Not at all—a great pleasure, I can assure you," he gaily.

He helped her to alight and saw her safe in the house, then got into the carriage again. "To Grosmont road," he said.

"Yes, m'lord," Charles replied.

"Where to now?" asked Barker, who was getting tired and generally desperate.

"Grosmont Road."

"Oh, my!" muttered Barker. "I wasn't surprised when broken legs didn't put him off Mrs. Harris; but when Mrs. Harris don't put him off Grosmont road, it is a pretty go."

Meanwhile, Dorothy had gone in to the entrance hall of Palace Mansions, where the porter of the establishment met her.

"A lady for you, ma'am, he said. Then there was a pause, a rust, and a glad cry of "Oh, Esther! Esther!"

CHAPTER IX.

DICK'S IMAGE.

It would be impossible for me to tell you what a relief it was for Dorothy to find her cousin Esther awaiting her on her return home. She cried a little, of course, and then managed to tell her all about poor Barbara's accident.

"Just as well for you that I turned up when I did, my dear," said Esther, drily; "it might have been very awkward for you to be left alone long."

"Oh, but Lord Aylmer was so kind," Dorothy cried. "He not only took me to the hospital to see Barbara and brought me back again, but he has actually gone off now to see his valet's wife, who is the very person to stay with me till Barbara is able to come home again."

"Ah well, it is a very good thing. Really, the world isn't half so bad as it sometimes seems," Esther said dreamily. "Well," with a quick change of tone, "and this Dick of yours—he is perfection, of course?"

"Dear Dick," murmured Dorothy. "Yes, he is perfection. He did hate to go and leave me, but he had to go—he had such a good appointment offered him, he did not dare refuse it. Still, he had to go and leave me, just now, especially. What he would say if he knew about Barbara I can't think. I don't think I would tell him, would you?"

"Not till all is over," answered Esther.

"It would only worry him for nothing. By-the-by, what is he like?"

"Oh," and Dorothy looked around for her Dick's portrait. "Oh, here he is," holding it out to her cousin.

Esther Brand took it and looked at it attentively for a long time, sipped her tea, and looked again and yet again.

"Well," said Dorothy, impatiently.

"I like him," said Esther, "he looks good and true, and he is a handsome man, too—a fine, honest-looking, manly man. Yes, I like him—you're a lucky little girl, Dorothy."

"So I think," answered Dorothy, proudly, "and Dick is just what he looks—honest as the day, and as good as gold."

For a moment she was tempted to tell Esther all about her meeting with David, then a feeling that it would scarcely be fair to him held her back, and she kept her own counsel about that matter.

"Of course there is no knowing what I might or might not have done if dear auntie had lived!" she said, wishing to explain everything for a long time, and yet avoid saying much about David's feelings for her, "and yet if I had never seen Dick; but then, you see, I did meet Dick, and Dick liked me, and—and!"

"And David Stevenson went to the wall,"

Esther said, finishing the sentence for her, "and a very proper and suitable place for him, too, my dear child," with a laugh.

Dorothy laughed, too. "Ah! you are all very hard on poor David," she said, softly.

So they sat talking over the old times and the new for more than an hour. Then Esther suddenly bethought her of dinner. And presently there came some one to the door who rang gently and knocked softly.

"I will go; sit still," cried Esther.

She went to the door, where she found a handsome, neatly-dressed woman of about forty years old. "Mrs. Harris?" she said, inquiringly.

"No," said Esther; "I am not Mrs. Harris, but this is her house. Will you come in? I suppose Lord Aylmer sent you?"

"My name is Harris, too, madame," the stranger answered, with a deprecating look as if she had rather taken a liberty in having married a man by the name of Harris. "Dear me, how odd! Well, I suppose my cousin will like to call you by your Christian name. And that is—"

"Amelia, madam," she answered quietly.

"Oh, yes!" Then Esther opened the drawing room door, and bade Amelia Harris follow her. "Dorothy, here is Lord Aylmer's—Why, my dear child, what is the matter?" for Dorothy was lying back in her chair with a face as white as chalk and pinched with pain.

"I am so ill!" she gasped. "Oh, Esther! Esther!"

Esther took firm ground at once. "Now, don't give way, my dear; all will be well," she asserted. "Here is our help, and we will have the doctor here in next to no time, if you will only tell me where to send for him."

"Dr. Franklin, in Victoria Road," Dorothy answered. "But don't leave me, Esther—don't."

"Certainly not, dearest. Amelia will go and fetch him," Esther returned.

"I had better go at once, madam," said Amelia, quietly.

"Yes, say Mrs. Harris is very ill—that is urgent."

"Yes, madam," answered Amelia.

She walked off to the Victoria road at a pretty quick pace, thinking hard as she went. "H'm! from what he told me, he never spoke to her before to-day. Queer, I wonder if he knows about this baby? Shall I wire him, or shall I keep the news as a little surprise for to-morrow? I'll keep it. The sight of his lordship's face will be worth something."

She knocked at Dr. Franklin's door and asked to see him in exactly the same quiet, self-possessed way that she had spoken to Miss Brand, and all the time her thoughts were running on this new fancy of his lordship's.

"A little, sickly-looking girl, little better than a child," she was thinking, as she followed the neat maid into a waiting room.

"Not, I dare say, that she's looking her best just now; but, still, what can he fancy in her after a woman like me—but there—Yes, sir," she said, aloud, "Mrs. Harris has been taken suddenly ill, and Miss Brand wished me to come and fetch you at once."

By that time she had reached the Mansions, and she went in, took off her bonnet and cloak, and bustled about as only a thoroughly good worker can do, getting ready for the great event which seemed imminent, which, indeed, was imminent, for by the time morning light shone over London there were two more inmates of the little flat in Palace Mansions—a stout, motherly nurse, who hushed upon her ample bosom a wee fragment of humanity, a very small and soft, pinkish person, who had grunted and squaled already in quite an alarming fashion, and who was, as Dorothy fondly told Esther Brand, the very image of his father, dear Dick.

HIDDEN COLONIES

Which Will be Found When China is Thrown Open.

It is quite possible that the conclusion of peace between China and Japan may be the means, in the near future, of enabling some clearer light to be thrown on the Jewish colony in China. One of the five ports to be opened to the outside world is that of Kai-feng-foo, in the province where the last remnant of the ancient Jewish settlement exists. Since their first discovery several attempts have been made to open up communication with them, but so pronounced is the fanaticism of the Chinese that all efforts in this direction have failed. It should not now be long, as a result of the complete transformation which the whole of China is bound to undergo, before trustworthy information as to the condition of the Jews of Kai-feng-foo can be obtained. It is, moreover, quite within the bounds of probability that other Jewish colonies, or traces of their existence, should be found in the hitherto inaccessible parts of the interior. The Kai-feng-foo colony was surely not the only one that was formed in China, perhaps more than 2,000 years ago. The expedition which traveled from the Euphrates to the Yellow River must have been very considerable in numbers, and its history, if it ever could be known, would be sure to possess extraordinary and romantic features. In a country so literary there may be some written records, both Jewish and native, which would be of inestimable value to Jewish history and science.

Disadvantages of the Slate.

The Germans show praiseworthy energy in the introduction of hygienic reforms into school life. Some of the leading colleges have just abolished the old slate and pencil. The reasons for this step are:—(1) A slight grey mark upon a slightly darker grey surface is more or less indistinct, and therefore trying to the eyesight; (2) The resistance of the hard pencil upon the hard slate is tiring to the muscles, and this resistance leads to perverted habits, which have to be overcome when the pupil begins to write with pencil or pen upon paper; (3) and last, but not least, the use of the slates, slate-pencils, and sponges is a very uncleanly custom, and leads to and establishes very uncleanly habits. So the slate, slate-pencil, and sponges have had to make way for the paper, lead-pencil and rubber for school use.

YOUNG FOLKS.

"In a Minute."

Robbie Brown was a bright, active little boy and a general favorite with all who knew him. His schoolmates did not think a game complete without him, and he was always sure to be the first one chosen. You might think that such a little boy would ever be on the alert for something to do that would help his mamma, but I am sorry to say, Robbie was not.

When he was enjoying an exciting game, or when at the most interesting part of a favorite book, his mamma often called him to run errands for her, and "in a minute" was sure to be the cheery response. But it was an easy matter to let that minute go by, and a number of others for company, before Robbie put in his appearance.

One day in early summer Robbie rushed into the sitting-room, and gave his school-books a triumphant fling into one corner and his hat into another. His face and manner would both indicate that something unusual had happened.

"No more school for three whole months!" he exclaimed. "Oh, won't that be jolly?"

"How will you spend your vacation?" asked his mamma, looking up from her sewing.

"I mean to have just as good a time as I possibly can," said Robbie. And then, as his mamma made no reply to this, he proached a subject which had been occupying his mind for the last few months.

"Really, mamma," he began, "can't I go to grandpa's this summer?"

"I'll see," said mamma, quietly.

This satisfied Robbie, for he knew that was almost as good as "yes."

That evening when the postman came with the mail he brought a letter for Robbie from his cousin Fred.

"Nellie and I came to grandpa's last week," he wrote, "and Ben and Daisy are coming to-morrow. Then we will have some gay times, but it will not be complete without you. Grandpa has promised to take us to the woods next Tuesday. We will take our dinner and stay all day. If you are coming at all this summer we want you to be here by that time. The strawberries are just getting ripe, and grandpa thinks it is wonderful how many we can eat. Now don't fail to come."

"FRED."

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Robbie when he had finished reading this letter, "can't I go?"

"Yes, I guess you may go," said his mamma.

"Oh, goody, goody!" exclaimed Robbie. "That's most too good to be true!" And he danced about the room, clapping his hands in delight. Two years before he had spent the summer at his grandpa's farm, and he remembered everything so well.

Robbie and his mamma were to start early Tuesday morning, and it seemed to him as though that time would never come. Shortly after breakfast Robbie thought it must be time to get ready, and going up to his mamma's room he opened the door, saying, "Isn't it time to get ready?"

"In a minute, dear," she quietly said, and then went on with her reading.

Robbie was very much disappointed, and in order to while away the time he went into the yard to play with his dog Rover. But he soon grew tired of this sport, and he again went up to his mamma's room.

"Oh, mamma?" he exclaimed, a little impatiently, "do hurry, for it's most train time now!"

She did not raise her eyes from her book when she said: "As soon as I finish the chapter I am reading."

During the next few minutes Robbie made frequent journeys to his mamma's room. Each time he found her reading, but she always said she would be ready "in a minute." The last time, when he was coming down the stairs, he heard a rumbling in the distance that sounded very much like an approaching train. He ran to the window, and sure enough, there was the morning train at the station. He stood by the window watching it until it disappeared around the curve, and then he went slowly up the stairs. He kept bravely up until he reached his mamma's room, and then throwing himself upon the couch he burst into tears.

"Oh, mamma!" he sobbed, "the train's gone, and now we can't go to-day at all. It's all your fault, too."

Mrs. Brown was no longer interested in her book, and laying it upon the table she drew her chair to Robbie's side and said: "I am very sorry I have disappointed you, but it had to be done. Listen now and I will tell you all about it."

For a long time she talked to the forlorn little fellow lying so still upon the couch. When she had finished and Robbie had dried his tears, he threw his arms around her neck saying:

"I s'pose I haven't done right and I am sorry, but I will do better, I really and truly will."

Mrs. Brown did not wish the punishment to be too severe, so the next morning she and Robbie started to the country. When Robbie stepped from the car he saw his grandpa there waiting for them.

"Why, mamma!" he exclaimed, "how do your s'pose grandpa knew that we were coming to-day? Didn't you write to them that we were coming yesterday?"

"Before she could make any reply grandpa came up and said:

"Come on and get into the buggy. Be spry about it, too, for I must be back in time to take the children to the woods."

"Why, I s'posed they were going yesterday," said Robbie, "for that was what Fred told me in his letter."

"They did intend to," said grandpa, "but when they got your mamma's letter saying that you could not come until to-day they decided to wait."

Robbie was so much interested in something that he saw along the road just then that he forgot to ask anything more about it until that evening.

"Mamma," he said, when he was almost asleep, "how did they know we were not coming yesterday?"

"When papa and I decided upon a plan to break you of that habit, I wrote and told them all about it."

"Well," said Robbie, "guess you won't have to do that any more, for I'll never say 'in a minute' again as long as I live."

I think we are safe in saying he never did.