

then? Would he see his wife then? He ought to, don't you think so?"

But Mrs. Holland shook her head with great decision. "When a couple have lived apart as many years as they have," she said, quietly, "it's not for others to say what they should or should not do at such a time—or at any time. It's best to leave it to themselves."

"And wouldn't he want to see her—at such a time?"

"I'm sure he wouldn't," said the housekeeper, frankly.

"And wouldn't she want to see him?"

"She might—in certain circumstances," said Mrs. Holland, with less decision. "But it would be no use."

"She might want to ask his forgiveness if she'd ever done anything to give him pain, for instance?" urged the girl, remembering what had been told about the last occasion on which the Viscountess had seen her husband, when she had fainted away at the sight.

"Oh, no, she wouldn't want to do that. But if she thought anyone had come between them in the matter of money, why, then she might wish to see him to try to make it right."

"For herself?"

"Yes."

Edna shuddered. She began to understand better Lord Lockington's anxiety to be where he could not be discovered.

"No," said the housekeeper with emphasis. "There's no need to ask what ought to be done in such a case, as things would settle themselves as far as those two were concerned easily enough. What might be asked is whether his Lordship's cousin ought not to be sent for, that he was always so fond of, and that her Ladyship was always so jealous of."

"Jealous?" inquired Edna.

"Yes. Master Jack used to be here often when he was a young boy, and my Lord was a young man. That was before I came here. And then when my Lord had no children of his own he would have liked to have his cousin and heir to live with him. But my Lady would never hear of it, and so he had to go and live away, for fear of exciting my Lady's displeasure, especially when she had gone her way and my Lord his."

"I should have thought," Edna said, "that he would have had his young cousin back, when she was away, for then it could not have mattered to her."

But the housekeeper contradicted this. "It mattered so much," she said, "that his coming would have brought my Lady to live at the Hall altogether. And, though I'm aware this sounds more like gossip than it ought—I'm of opinion myself that, my Lord and my Lady not having got on too well, and he not being pleased with her way of taking his accident and its results, my Lord wouldn't have asked his young cousin here, for fear his doing so should have brought my Lady back."

To Edna this separation of husband and wife, especially now that the former was ill, was a very dreadful thing. It seemed to her that a strong effort ought to be made by somebody to bring them together, if only just at the last. For him to die unreconciled and unforgiving seemed an awful calamity.

There was another thing that troubled her. "And this cousin that he's so fond of, wouldn't he be able to see him if he were very ill, and if he wanted to?" asked she, cautiously feeling her way, and keeping a very keen eye on the housekeeper.

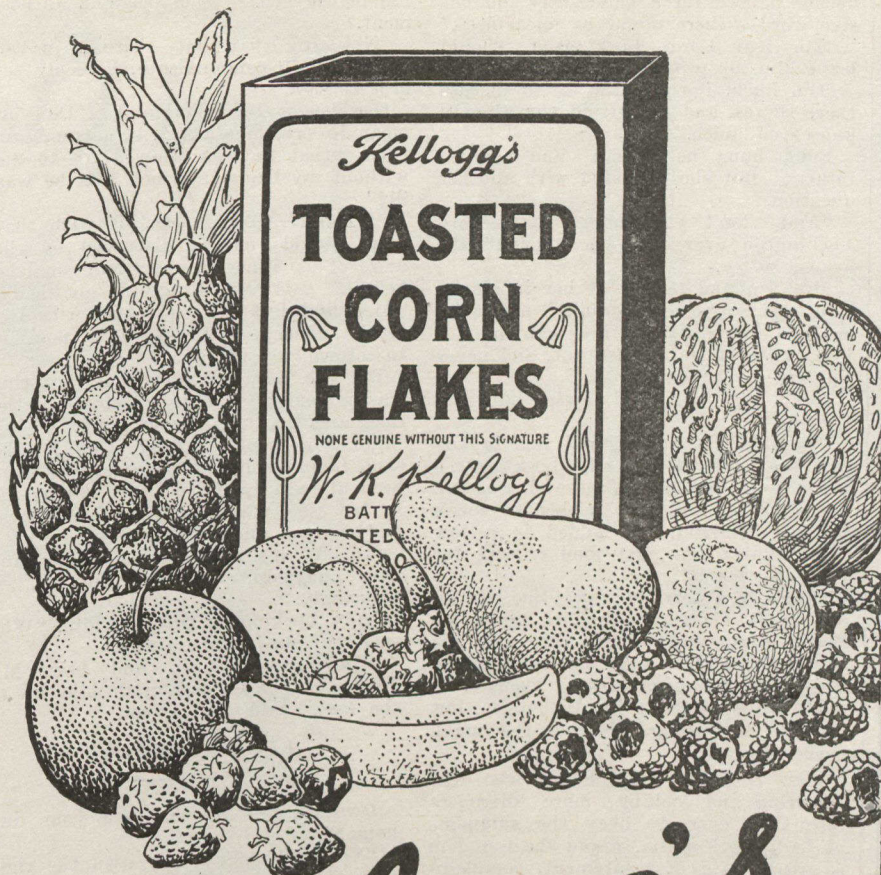
"Mrs. Holland, however, shook her head again: "Not while my Lady's here," she said. "There'd be too much fuss made, and my Lord hates a fuss."

Edna looked slightly incredulous. "Lord Lockington," she persisted, softly, "is a man who is fond of having his own way, isn't he?"

"Oh, hush, my dear. Yes, of course he is. But that's not exactly how one puts it when speaking of a nobleman. He is determined, accustomed to be obeyed, of course."

"And yet, according to what you say, he has never had this young cousin with him since his marriage, although he used to be as fond of him as if he had been his own son?"

"No. But it's just as well, as I have said, since my Lady would be sure to think it was prejudicial to her interests, and there might be trouble, or if not exactly trouble, yet—the house-



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