



THE most precious things in the world are those which cannot be bought—the tender touch of a little child's fingers, the light of a woman's eyes, and the love in a woman's heart.

"A MAN'S CASTLE"

By Emily Calvin Blake
(Concluded from last week)

So the next evening at the first opportunity, Leonard put the question to his wife, and waited anxiously for her answer.

"But, Len, dear," she protested, "Mother and Father would be so lonely if we came upstairs after dinner. And Mother is so sensitive, and she might think that we did not care for her company."

All resistance seemed to leave the husband. He did not attempt to argue.

"Very well," he assented listlessly; "just as you please."

Helen came and sat on the arm of his chair, leaning her head lovingly against his.

"Dear boy," she said; "don't we owe something to others?"

"Indeed we do, Helen," he answered promptly, "but I want you all alone."

A puzzled frown lay between Helen's eyes as she replied:

"Now you want me all alone," she echoed; "when we are married!"

Leonard gave a quick, impatient sigh.

"I cannot discuss it with you, Helen," he confessed, "because I don't quite understand the situation or my own longings. I was perfectly willing to live here with your parents for the first year, but—"

"Aren't my parents good to you?" inquired Helen softly.

"They are," the young man admitted; "but sometimes I want to feel that I am everything to you as you are to me. Don't you understand that, little girl?"

"I'm sorry, dear," Helen said; "but I don't understand why we can't be everything to each other and still live here. My Mother is so much to me; I couldn't bear the thought of leaving her."

Suddenly Leonard sat up and, taking the girl's hand, looked earnestly at her.

"If your Mother is everything to you, why did you marry me?"

"Oh, Len, Len," the girl cried, a sob catching at her throat, "how can you ask such a question? You know that I love you."

In a moment Leonard was all contrition. He too her fondly into his arms and stroked her hair.

"There, there, Helen, we'll not talk of it any more," he promised. "I am selfish."

Nothing more was said at the time and yet the talk did not serve to satisfy the questions that besieged the young man.

And, soon the inevitable happened. Leonard became a frequent visitor at the club. The first night he went there he left at midnight. He ex-

perienced a little sinking of the heart as he opened the front door of his home. What would Helen say? But Helen was asleep with a little smile on her lips, and just as he entered the room the white haired mother emerged therefrom. She held up a warning finger.

"Be very quiet, Len," she murmured. "Helen does not sleep soundly upon first going to bed. I've just tucked her in."

A muttered imprecation rose to Leonard's lips. Not one word from wife or mother regarding his absence.

True, he had telephoned that he would not be there for dinner, but that was no reason for them to conclude that he would remain all even-

I have been receiving Farm and Dairy for several weeks past and I regard it as an admirably edited paper and a weekly reporter of interesting matter and profit to all in the community.—Rev. J. P. Black, Peterborough, Co., Ont.

ing. With unhappiness tagging at his bewildered heart, he retired.

The next day Helen telephoned to him.

"Shall you be at home to-night, Len?" she asked. "If so, he prepared to go to a box party at the Herberts."

"That's the first I've heard of a box party," Len growled.

"I ain't think no more," Helen admitted, sweetly, "but if you'd rather not go—"

"I'd rather not," Leonard answered abruptly; "I'm sorry," he added somewhat contritely.

"It doesn't matter at all," Helen assured him, innocently; "Mother is going."

"All right," her husband responded. "I hope that you'll enjoy yourself."

He hung up the receiver and turned to his desk. What was the end to be, he wondered. Helen seemingly had no need of him, of his love, of their own. His face brightened as pleasant thoughts present themselves to dispel the gloomy ones.

How wonderful it would seem. Helen walking to the station to meet him; the little dining-room table at which he might sit and watch her sweet face, unobserved by other eyes than his.

He would be glad to have Helen's mother visit them in his home, the home that he had prepared for his wife. And then the long evenings together. He would

insist upon a lamp in the sitting-room. Helen would sit on one side of it and he on the other. He would read his paper and perhaps Helen would sew. He had never seen her sew, he now remembered.

Dearest of all was the thought that she would come to him for everything. That she might ask his opinion and consult his wishes.

Unconsciously he found himself whistling, and he felt happier than he had since his marriage.

That night he waited impatiently until Helen returned from the theatre. He remained in their room until she came upstairs. He had learned to wince when the mother advised him not to talk too long to Helen as she was sleepy, or to be careful that she was warmly covered. He felt that alone he could see to all that. Did not the girl belong to him?

Hastily he put the crowding thoughts from him as his wife entered the door. She came in, a vision in fairy white.

"Oh, Len," she exclaimed. "You are at home, I am so tired!"

"Are you, sweetheart?" he answered lovingly. "Let me loosen your coat."

She came to him and held her face up while he fumbled with the hook.

Then, when the fastening fell apart, Len lifted the dimpled chin of his wife and looked longingly into her eyes.

"You are tired, little girl, I know," he commenced; "but I can't wait. Helen, the year is nearly up. Shall we go to a home of our own?"

He waited breathlessly for her answer.

Helen drew away petulantly. "Oh, Len," she protested; "not yet; I am so happy here with Mother. And she would grieve so."

"Very well," Leonard answered, at once; then he added hastily: "I was a fool forever consenting to live here."

Helen's face paled, but she did not speak at once. Then as she removed

alrout announcement:

"I am going away!"

Helen let her eyes seek his for a second before replying.

"Permanently?" then she asked.

A peculiar expression crossed the man's face.

"I think so—I hope so," he said.

"Oh, Leonard," she cried; "why do you say that? Are you not happy here? And you would not take Helen away?"

"No," he assented with a short laugh; "Helen would not care to go with me. I shall leave her—with you."

"When do you go?" Helen's tones were calm, yet they set the man on edge.

"As soon as I can arrange," he answered without looking at her. His brain seemed bursting with the many thoughts that surged madly through him. The old question rose uppermost. What was it all about, anyway? What had begun it?

The mother looked from one young face to the other. She could not understand. Had they not treated Leonard as a son?

Suddenly the man turned away.

"I'm tired," he said; "good-night."

Helen put down her book.

"It is late," she admitted; "I think I'll retire too."

She went swiftly to her mother, and kissed her lovingly on each cheek.

"Come upstairs, dear," she requested, softly; "I don't want you to stay down here alone."

The mother put the girl's clinging arms gently from her.

"Go with Len, Helen," she said quietly; "I'll sit here for a little while."

Helen lingered for a moment, then followed her husband.

Left alone, the mother seemed to be able to grasp but one thought.

Her daughter was to be separated from her husband!

Tears rose to her eyes; then her mind went back to the early years of her married life. She and her husband had been poor, but they had lived in four small rooms, yet they had been happy. She, therefore, possessed no experience to guide her and show her that the year of adjustment should be spent alone.

Then, motherhood with its train of blessings had come to her. How happy she had been. She had had no helper of any kind. But it had been joyous to her. She and her husband had dressed the child together; when he, in loving helpfulness, had wiped the dishes and perhaps dusted the ornaments in that little kingdom of their own.

The words echoed in her heart: "the little kingdom of their own!" Where she had reigned mistress and he master, but she had never realized that she had unwittingly placed her finger on the trouble here. Then the tears fell upon her thin hands. How blind and selfish she had been. Her child had made her a mother, and she and her husband had missed the joy that comes to the wife who builds with her husband. Greatest of all, she had missed the beauty of self-sacrifice. The white head fell forward and her dim eyes looked into the future. To her had come the lesson. To her now belonged the duty of teaching her son.

Suddenly she arose and walked across the room. Above the lamp hung the picture of Helen as a baby. The mother looked up at it through her tears.

"My baby," she murmured; "my little girl. And now I must give you up."

She put forth her hand as if to take it, and then the picture faded before her. This tiny life was hers. God had given it to her. But the next thought caught and held her in its sharpness.

Why had the child been given to her? To keep, to love, and, alas, some day to give into the charge of another.

her hat she looked wonderingly at him.

"I am very sorry that you feel this way," she finally said; "it is something I cannot understand."

He did not reply and in unbroken silence they retired.

From that time the breach daily widened. Club life claimed Leonard's entire attention, and Helen, though at times very pale and sad, still continued her unceasing round of gaiety.

Then one day Leonard overheard a conversation which quickened his desire to change domestic affairs as they now stood. The man he represented desired to send a man to another state to open new offices.

"We would offer the position to Reynolds," he second heard the president say; "but his mother is ill."

Almost without thought, Leonard made up his mind to ask for this position. He would have spoken then, but his mother did not present itself. He felt confident that the position would be given to him should he desire it.

As usual he spent the evening at the club. It was after midnight when he arrived home.

Contrary to the usual custom, Helen was not asleep when her husband came in. She sat near the lamp in the library room, and her mother would never retire until Helen had done so, sat near, idly turning the pages of a magazine. Both women looked up as Leonard entered. Helen smiled absently at him, and immediately resumed her reading.

Walking to the table near which his wife sat, the young man made an