



The Family Circle.

"Home, Sweet Home."

Constance Leslie's Bouquet.

CHAPTER II.

Several days had passed; the *tableaux* were in preparation, and the day of the ball was finally settled. The young people had been out skating all the morning; but in the afternoon a thaw having set in, Lady Margaret proposed that they should begin the Christmas decorations. They looked a cheerful, happy party, judging from outward appearances, surrounded by the bright evergreens and scarlet berries, the fire sending a warm glow over the room—Kittie, as usual, sitting about everywhere with a merry repartee and smile for all, good-natured Bee doing the work no one else cared about, and all more or less busy.

Poor Fred Vane was at last desperately in love with Constance Leslie; but he could not understand her—sometimes she would be so kind and friendly, and then again so cold and distant. Lady Olivia told him she was a dreadful flirt, but that he could not believe. To-day especially she had avoided being alone with him, and he was burning with an eager desire to know his fate. It seemed as if Lady Olivia was aware of what he wanted, for she kept him busily employed in waiting upon her, and he could not without being positively rude, leave her side. Once, on looking up he met Constance's eyes looking reproachfully at him, and he started as if he would have gone over to her, but she instantly began talking merrily to Captain Foster, her devoted admirer, but one whom she thoroughly despised.

"Look, Mr. Vane," said Lady Olivia, maliciously; "the Captain's suit seems to prosper, or else, as I told you before, Miss Leslie possesses the art of flirting in no common degree."

Fred experienced a pang of jealousy at hearing the two names mentioned together, and he felt as if he should very much like to take "that coxcomb Foster," as he politely termed him, by the collar and pitch him out of the window.

"How attentive Mr. Vane is to Olivia!" said Marion Eri to Harry; and Constance, who was sitting near them, could hear every word they uttered. "It would be a good match for your friend as far as money is concerned; but he is worthy of a better fate."

"That he is," agreed Harry, warmly, "for there's not a better fellow living. As for that creature, Lady Olivia, I dislike her immensely—and I am sure the love is all on her side, for Fred told me this morning—"

Here they moved away, and the rest of the sentence was lost to Constance; but, as she glanced across to where the two alluded to were sitting, the thought crossed her the first time. Could he really intend marrying her for her money?—they seemed to be talking together so earnestly. She was aroused from her reverie by Captain Foster exclaiming—

"What is the matter, Miss Leslie? I have asked you three times if I should get you some more holly-berries for your wreath."

"I really beg your pardon, Captain Foster," said Constance quietly—"yes, you may get me some, please."

"Oh, Miss Leslie," spoke Kittie, coming to where she was sitting, "will you take part in a *tableau vivant*? Please do," she added, seeing Constance hesitate—"We want you so much. Don't refuse us."

"I cannot," said Constance, smiling, "when you plead so earnestly. But what have you fixed upon? I have not heard."

"Only four very simple ones," said Kittie—"and thank you for promising to help. The first is to be Flora McVoor—your humble servant," laughed Kittie, bowing—"discovered in the garden singing to her lover, Capt. Waverley—he and the attendants are not fixed upon yet. The second is to represent Marie-Antoinette about to partake of her last supper, while Harry and Lord Alfred Dalton will be the two soldiers playing at cards. *Troisième* number three—The Royal Family imprisoned in the Temple during the Great Revolution—Charles Thorne is to be Louis XVI.; Marion, Marie-Antoinette; Nora, Madame Elizabeth; Bee, the young Princess Therese. And now for the last and what I think," added Kittie, "will be the prettiest. You are to be Amy Robsart during her confinement in Cummor Palace, Mr. Vane will be Wayland disguised as the pedlar displaying his wares to you, and Maud will be Janet Foster."

"Pon honour," said Captain Foster, who had returned with the berries, "they'll be pretty pictures; deuced shame, though, you don't make me Wayland."

"Pon honour," thought Kittie, "you are a conceited ape, and Miss Leslie looks bored to death with you."

So she sent him with a message to Nettie Grey, knowing that she would do her utmost to retain him.

"Anything to get rid of him," said Kittie, laughing—"isn't he a nuisance?"

"He is indeed," answered Constance; "and he seems to think every one is bound to admire him as he does himself. I would rather," thought the young girl, as Kittie moved away, "not be Amy Robsart, especially as they have chosen Mr. Vane as Wayland; but I cannot refuse now—they would think it so odd. How foolish I am to care whether he notices me or not!" she reflected bitterly. "At any rate he shall not see what I feel!" and giving her head a little defiant toss, she walked over to where Kittie and Nora were sitting.

"I have finished this wreath," she said, forcing herself to speak cheerfully; "is there anything else I can do?"

"Oh, yes," replied Kittie, "we want—" but stopped on noticing how pale and tired Constance looked. "What is the matter, Miss Leslie?" she asked, considerably.

"My head aches dreadfully," said the young girl, wearily, putting her hand to her forehead.

"I am sorry; you must not work any more, but go and lie down, and I will bring you a cup of tea," proposed the warm-hearted girl.

"Thank you, my dear," said Constance, gratefully; "a few

hours' rest will no doubt do me good."

Kittie's eyes followed her to the door. "There's mischief brewing," she remarked, turning to Nora, "and that horrid Olivia Dalton is at the bottom of it," she added, spitefully. "If I do not take care, my romance will be spoilt."

"What do you mean?" questioned Nora.

"I mean," answered Kittie, angrily, "that Fred Vane ought to be ashamed of himself; he is treating Constance Leslie shamefully. He made violent love to her at first, and now all this afternoon he has been flirting outrageously with Olivia Dalton; and that's the fellow who never was spooney in his life! He didn't want much thawing."

"I don't think he cares for lady Olivia one bit," observed Nora.

"Then why does he sit by her side all the afternoon?" asked Kittie, who could not bear that her favorite Constance should be slighted.

"I have been watching them," said Nora, "and several times he has tried to get away, but she has detained him; and when Captain Foster was talking to Miss Leslie, I saw Olivia speak to Mr. Vane and glance across at them. He looked so wretched, I felt quite sorry for him. I am sure she is trying to make mischief between them."

"Miss Kittie," said Guy Lynn, joining the two girls, "I want your valuable assistance. Will you come and show me where to hang this wreath?"

"No," replied Kittie; "I can't be bothered." Then, seeing him look hurt, she relented and said she would. "But," she added, "you must promise to follow my advice, even if I tell you to hang the wreath round Miss Frumpy's neck," and she laughed a merry ringing laugh, free from care as a child's, as she followed the young curate to the other side of the room.

CHAPTER III.

For the last two or three days Evie had not been very well. It was a slight feverish cold—that was all; but nothing could induce Miss Leslie to leave her little charge. In the evening, however, she was so much better that Constance had persuaded Mrs. Hartley to let her come downstairs and allow the two children to have tea with her in her sitting-room. Such a cosy little party they looked. Teastood invitingly on the table, a bright fire was burning in the grate, sending a rich warm glow over the whole room, the sofa was drawn close up to the fire, and on it reclined the little invalid.

"Tea isn't quite ready yet," exclaimed Bertie, a bright, handsome lad of ten. "They haven't brought in the muffins. We are to have muffins for tea,—muffins. What do you think of that?"

"I think it's all very nice," answered Evie; "and it would be nice still if Miss Leslie would tell us a little story whilst we are waiting and before they bring the candles."

"Capital, Evie," said Bertie—"the very thing. Do tell us a little story, Miss Leslie—oh do!"

"Well," assented Constance, smiling at the boy's eager face; "only it must be a very short one." And, taking a seat by Evie, and resting the little golden head against her shoulder, she began—

"Once upon a time there were two girls. One was very grand and beautiful; the other was very poor, and had to work for her living. The rich lady had a great many friends; the poor one, not any—at least very few," said Constance correcting herself. "One gentleman, who came to the house where they were both staying, was at first very kind to the poor girl; but, after a little time, he was happy only when he was with the grand lady."

"Was the poor one pretty?" interrupted Bertie.

"Oh, nothing to speak of," said Constance. "One day they went out for a long drive; but, as they were coming back something frightened the horses, and they ran away, and the two girls were thrown out. Just as it happened, the gentleman drove up in his carriage, and helped the rich lady up, and drove her home, but never looked at the poor girl, and—"

"What a shame!" cried Bertie, his cheeks glowing with indignation. "And did he marry the rich lady? I like the poor one much the best."

"And so do I," cried a voice from the door; and looking, they saw Fred Vane standing in the doorway, with a peculiar smile on his face.

Constance rose, looking rather confused, and said—

"It was hardly kind of you not to have sooner made us aware of your presence, Mr. Vane. It was taking an unfair advantage," she added, bitterly, and in a low tone.

"Don't be angry, Miss Leslie," returned Fred, gazing with admiration at the young girl's flushed face. "Mrs. Hartley sent me to inquire after Evie. I could not interrupt your story, and you all looked so cosy I thought it a shame to disturb you. Did he marry the rich lady? Tell me, Constance," he said, eagerly.

"Oh, hush!" cried Constance, glancing at the children.

"What does it matter? It was only a story."

"Well, Evie," said Fred, "am I to tell your mamma you are better? You look very comfortable, and I've half a mind to stay here. At any rate, you might offer a fellow a cup of tea, Miss Leslie."

"Oh, do stay," cried both the children at once, with whom Fred was a great favorite—"do make him, Miss Leslie."

"I don't want any making, I can assure you," said Fred.

Constance seeing that he was determined to stop, made no further opposition, but commenced pouring out tea, and, catching the infection, was soon as merry as any of the little party.

"Now," said Bertie, when they had finished tea, "do play us a little bit, Miss Leslie. You need not get rid of me just yet, Mr. Vane—I want you to hear 'Bicton Bells'; it's so very pretty."

"Well," returned Fred, glancing at his watch, "I need not dress for another hour; so you will not get rid of me just yet, Miss Leslie—I am enjoying myself immensely. And now for 'Bicton Bells.'"

"What would Lady Olivia say?" thought Constance, as she seated herself quietly at the piano and began playing, whilst Fred sat watching the dainty white fingers.

"When I am in my solitary lodgings," he said, with a tender light in his honest brown eyes, "I shall fancy I hear the strain of 'Bicton Bells' wafted to me. And now grant me a favor—sing me one song before you go."

And the young girl, feeling so dangerously happy, yet scarcely knowing why, sang, in a clear, rich voice, the pretty, yet simple Scotch ballad, "We'd better bide a wee."

"I suppose we had," thought Fred, somewhat mournfully; "for how can I ask her to share my miserable poverty? Thank you, Constance," he added aloud—"I shall not soon forget this happy hour;" and then, as Bertie came up, "I shall see you again this evening. Mrs. Hartley tells me we are to have a rehearsal."

"Yes," said Constance; "Miss Selby is coming to fetch me when they are ready."

"Then *au revoir*, but not adieu," said Fred as he left the room.

"What am I to think?" said Constance to herself, as some time afterwards she was sitting alone. "Twice this evening he has called me Constance. Can he really love me as I do him?" and she blushed as she owned to herself how dear he was to her. "If all is true that Lady Olivia tells me, why does he behave to me as he has done? This evening he looks so noble and true! How lonely I shall be when he is gone!"

"Why, Miss Leslie, you are all in darkness dreary!" exclaimed Kate's merry voice, as she entered the room. "We are waiting for you. Are you ready?"

"Quite," replied Constance; "and you have just come in time to save me from a fit of the blues."

"I am glad of it," said Kittie; "but come along, I promised them I would be back again in two minutes. Olivia is as cross as a bear because we won't let her see the rehearsal; so she has taken refuge in a game of chess with Captain Foster."

"Are all assembled?" presently called Kittie, as she and Constance entered the green-room. "Hullo! Mr. Lynn, what business have you here? You don't belong to us."

"But I mean to stay," said Guy; "and I should so like to belong to you," he added in a low voice, meant only for Kittie, and causing the girl's face to become rosy red.

"I suppose wilful man must have his way," she returned, laughing; "so come and help me to arrange the scenery for Number One."

Very pretty looked Constance as Amy Robsart, and so thought Wayland, as he displayed his wares to her. His looks must have conveyed his thoughts, for Constance's face became suffused with blushes, causing Kittie to say in a low tone to her afterwards—

"You mustn't blush, Amy Robsart, on the night of the ball as you did to-night. Never mind," she added, seeing Constance look confused; "it was very becoming."

[To be Continued.]

Church Manners.

Be on time. No one has a right to disturb a congregation or a preacher by being tardy.

Never look around to see who is coming in when the door opens. It diverts your own and others' attention from the exercises, and is discourteous to the leader.

Never talk or whisper in church, especially after the exercises are opened.

Never pull out your watch to see what time it is when the text is announced, or during the sermon. Better to feed on a sermon than to time it.

Never lean your head on the pew rail before you, as though indifferent to the preacher.

Conform, if possible, in conscience, to the usages of the church in which your worship—kneel, stand, bow accordingly.

Never manifest your disapprobation of what is being said, by unpleasant sounds, or sign, or by hastily leaving.

Do not fidget, as though the service were a weariness. Be quiet and decorous to the very end.

Do not put on your overcoat or adjust your wrappings till after the benediction.

No gentleman ever defiles a place of worship with tobacco.

Never be one of a staring crowd about the door or in the vestibule, before or after service.

Do nothing out of keeping with the time, place, and purpose of a religious assembly.

He Would Quote Latin.

The Duke of Wellington once said to a young member of Parliament, who had asked advice as to getting the ear of the House, "Sit down when you are through, and don't quote Latin."

Lawyer Benham, of the old Cincinatti bar, did not sympathize with the Duke's advice. He was an orator, and very fond of showing off his classical learning before a jury.

In a murder trial, he warned the jury not to allow public opinion, which was against his client, to influence their verdict.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said, in concluding his appeal, "Give up, drop entirely all feeling in this important matter, and be like the ancient Roman in his adherence to the truth, who, in its defence, most eloquently declared, '*Amicus Cato, amicus Plato, amicus Cicero, sed major veritas.*'"

The next morning the lawyer found himself reported in the newspapers as follows:—"I may cuss Cato, I may cuss Plato, I may cuss Cicero, said Major Veritas!" We are afraid the orator cussed then.

"Remember who you are talking to, sir," said an indignant parent to a fractious boy; "I am your father."

"Well, who's to blame for that?" said the young impertinence. "Taint me."

"It may be," soliloquized an afflicted old lady, "that my troubles are all blessings in disguise, as my friends are all the times telling me, but I do wish they'd just throw off the disguise once in a while."