

but lo! he just gave me one strange, white, cold look, as if he did not in the least love me any more, as if I were the dirt under his feet, and then he was gone, and then I didn't care what became of me. It got worse and worse, and I would not have any one guess how wretched I was, and the very first time Mr. Harrington asked me to be his wife, I half promised I would."

"What a wretched, wretched business!" sighed Miss Ingram. "But in one thing, Lulie, I can't understand you. I have been proud in my time, but had I been in your place I would, at least when I had come to my senses, have written to the man I had wronged, and acknowledged my fault."

"I did write," whispered Lulie, her head drooping, "and he—he sent back the letter unopened this very night. Oh! oh! he never will care for me again!"

Miss Ingram pursed her lips and looked over her niece's head into the fire.

After a long pause—

"Lulie," said she, I sent a note to Will by Mr. Harrington, and his reply came to-night. I can understand it still better from what you have told me. I'm quite sure he loves you, child, and though Mr. Harrington did frighten me at the moment, I do not believe Will has done anything wrong. What I do feel is that unless this trouble can be made right between you two, it will have spoiled his life. It is plain to me that he is throwing everything away for your sake, and you certainly have been a bad girl."

Lulie nestled closer and sobbed more softly, as one comforted; and soon after the aunt and niece parted for the night.

The last morning of the year opened with that winter brightness which so rarely smiles on London; and at eleven o'clock precisely Mr. Neaves was shown into Miss Ingram's drawing-room, and found her alone, and evidently under some excitement.

"Oh, Nathaniel!" she exclaimed, taking his hand quite eagerly between her lady-like palms, "what's this about Will? Mr. Harrington really frightened us. But I can't think—no, I'm sure he has done nothing wrong."

"I can't understand," said Mr. Neaves looking very much surprised, "why Harrington's name should come in at all. You got my note? I've come about your nephew. We must not let him throw up things in this way, you know. Of course I've seen what was the matter all along; he's been jilted, and thinks life has nothing left in it for him any more. I felt that way myself, Betty—you know when I mean"—a wonderfully sweet smile breaking over his face; "but I pulled through, made a mint of money, and like my chop as well as another man."

As she remained silent, Mr. Neaves, after a short sigh, went on in his usual tone: "I suppose Miss Lulie has been fractious, and you and I, as the two best and nearest friends these foolish young people have, ought to be able to get them to kiss and make up, and ring in the new year merrily. So, as there's no time to be lost, if you'll just please send for Miss Lulie, we'll talk over things comfortably."

"Oh, I—I don't quite think that would do," said Miss Ingram, hastily putting out her hand as he would have rung the bell. "Fortunately I can tell you how matters stand. It's just a lovers' quarrel, and at first my niece was most at fault; but it was very foolish of Will to take a headstrong girl at her word." Mr. Neaves turned abruptly toward her, but she hurried on: "Then, when she repented and wrote to him, it was certainly very unkind to merely fling back her letter unopened. Of course you can see the next overture must come from him. I can't have Lulie, who is a dear good girl with all her faults, too much humbled."

"Nanse sent back her letter unopened! I should not have expected that of him."

"Then matters got worse through Mr. Harrington's trying to step into Will's place. You see it was about him they quarrelled; and last night he was here, and he told us that Will had got into some dreadful scrape, that it had leaked out in the office, and that you had first offered and then withdrawn the offer of partnership; and, oh! he's coming here to-night, and he made a point of it with Lulie that if she would engage herself to him, he would help Will out."

"Why, Betty, the man's a scamp—a thorough scamp," cried Mr. Neaves, with a very stern face. "Nanse has done nothing whatever out of the way, except that he's an ass, and the best, straightest, truest young fellow in all London; and this Harrington. I think the worse of Miss Lulie that she could ever have anything to say to such a creature as that after having a man like Nanse at her feet. I don't half care to get this quarrel made up between them; I don't half care—"

"Stop, Nathaniel. I can't have you speak like that of Lulie. She has suffered quite enough from her own foolish pride, and now from Will's and"—quite fiercely—"a man should not leave the field in that way. If he cares to win, he should stand his ground."

Mr. Neaves sprang forward, his face transformed with sudden kindling energy: "Why, then, Betty, Betty, that's a good lesson, and I've got it by heart first time saying."

Miss Ingram started back at the advance of her two apt pupil; but the scene was changed entirely by the entrance of Lulie Featherfew, to whom Mr. Neaves addressed himself with his characteristic abrupt directness:

"Good-morning, Miss Lulie; for I hope it is a good morning; and will you tell me—I'm old

enough to be your father, my dear—will you tell me whether you love Mr. Nanse? Because"—keeping fast the hands that tried to flutter from his—"if you do, why be unhappy, and make him unhappy, when the least little bit of common sense will set all right, you know?"

There is no knowing how the girl would have borne this onset from anybody else, but there was something so unmistakable in the simple, plain, whole kindness of it, and in his disinterested unconsciousness of the possibility of offending, that the true ring in the girl's nature answered to it; and besides, her heart was soft with true repentance, and sore with the fear of having lost her lover past recovery. So, with much blushing and hanging of the head, the proud girl faltered out, softly:

"But he wouldn't even read my letter."

"Oh, just let me have that letter, please."

Pat came the letter out of her pocket, as if it had known it would be in request.

"Now don't be afraid, my dear; I'm not going to read it. And you can trust me—tell her that, Betty. I'll not put you to shame before any man; and just stay in, both of you, please, till you hear from me."

"Why, aunt, he called you Betty!" was Lulie's dumfounded ejaculation as the door closed on Mr. Neaves.

"An old habit he sometimes falls into," said Miss Ingram, quickly. "We knew each other at school."

"What can he be going to do with my letter?" murmured Lulie, re-absorbed in her own feelings, and in hot and cold shivers of conjecture.

This is what Mr. Neaves did with it. On reaching the office he sent for Nanse. The young man looked very wan and heavy-hearted.

"I called for you," said Mr. Neaves, "to ask you if that is your handwriting"—and he plumped into the young man's hand the letter he had brought away from Lulie Featherfew.

"Yes, sir, that's my hand." The hot blood flew into his face; he was staring at the postmark, and burst out in great agitation: "But, sir, this was posted yesterday, sir—see here, 'December 30'—and I have not written to—that address for weeks."

"The envelope is broken; see what it contains," Mr. Neaves spoke tersely.

Nanse drew out the inclosure, and gave a short cry: "Why, sir, it's a letter to me from—oh, sir, here's foul play!"

"Hush!" said the older man, almost as excited as the younger. "Ask me no questions yet. Get away somewhere and read your letter. Wait, though. Make me one promise—that you'll not answer it, whatever it is, but meet me to-night, eight o'clock sharp, at Miss Ingram's, and not a word about anything to anybody. Your word on this?"

"Yes, Mr. Neaves."

They wrung hands and Nanse hurried away. He was met on the street by Harrington.

Halloo, Nanse! what's up? Have you seen a ghost?"

"Yes, the ghost of a wronged love and of a sham friendship!" Nanse flung out these words at Harrington. The latter leaped to the sudden reckless resolve of risking all on a last throw.

"Oh, come, Nanse, a girl should be allowed to choose, and if you had won, I'd have wished you joy, old boy—by Jove, I would!"

"What do you mean?" asked Nanse, facing round upon his old friend.

"That Lulie Featherfew last night gave me her promise to be Mrs. Harrington."

"If that is true, you stand in no need of my or any congratulations," said Nanse, so quietly that he had gone many paces on his way before Harrington recovered from his surprise.

The five o'clock post brought Miss Ingram the following epistle:

"Dear Betty,—Nanse and I will be with you to-night at eight. If Harrington calls, keep him, and ask Miss Lulie to stay in her room till I send for her.

"Your

"NATHANIEL."

"Oh, what does he say?" cried Lulie Featherfew, in a great flutter. "Can I see it?"

But somehow Miss Ingram thought she would not show this note.

"Mr. Neaves will be here to-night, my dear, and bring a friend with him; and, Lulie—I don't think you need mind—he expresses a wish that you should keep your room till he sends for you."

"How very odd!"

"Nathaniel always was eccentric."

"Nathaniel!" echoed Lulie.

"Well, that's his name, child, and I told you we were at school. There's nothing in that; I should hope."

When Lulie was gone, Miss Ingram drew out her letter and looked at it again, with blushes and flutterings like any young girl. "Dear Betty! Oh, yes, if you would give way in the least, they will have all! and, 'Your Nathaniel.' Well, I never!"

And when, at eight o'clock precisely, Mr. Neaves was announced, it is a question whether he observed as quickly as young Nanse did on his arrival, three minutes later, that Miss Ingram's soft brown locks were puffed and plaited more elaborately than usual, that the lace at her throat and wrists was of a bridal fineness, and that in her cheeks was a rose like that of early girlhood.

When, in answer to the summons, Miss Lulie came in, with soft lace at her throat and wrists, and such a rose in her cheeks as only youth and love and tender fear and bounding hope could

paint, there was just no explanation at all, but a glad soft cry of each other's names, and then they went off together into the curtained alcove, where only so few hours before Lulie had stood shrinking in such wretchedness from the caresses of Harrington.

Suddenly Lulie gave a great start, and laid her finger on Will's lips, as they both heard Mr. Harrington announced, and the next moment heard Mr. Neaves saying,

"You are just in season to congratulate me on what I consider a very fortunate change in my business, by which, though a tried old friend goes out of the firm, a dear young friend, and one of the most capable and upright young men I ever knew, comes in."

He went to the alcove, and returned leading Nanse by the hand. "It will be 'Neaves, Nanse & Neaves' from to-morrow, and Mr. Nanse has all the appointments for the counting room and outer offices. Now tell me, Mr. Harrington, have I not prepared a pleasant surprise for you in securing you the first chance to wish a friend joy of well-merited promotion?"

The eyes of the young men met, Nanse's literally danced with the happy light of love, so happy in its renewal that he could not bear to look on the sullen and pale countenance of his defeated silent foe.

"Ah, sir," he exclaimed, "if it's left with me, there'll be few changes, and certainly none in the counting-room;" and his looks entreated some compassion of Mr. Neaves for Harrington.

"Where's Lulie?" said Mr. Neaves, ignoring these looks. He went behind the curtains and drew the young lady forth into the light, and laying her hands in those of Nanse, he turned again to Harrington.

You know they were engaged to each other long ago, and had a little tiff, as lovers will, and to-night they're making up for lost time. By Jove, sir—with sudden ferocity—"take a lesson by this night, and by the forbearance of these loving hearts make me show you!"

Harrington, who had not spoken, turned and went towards the door. There, Mr. Neaves, who withheld Nanse and Lulie from approaching him, put out his hand.

"Take a week's leave, and then come back to your old place if you choose. All here are agreed to let by-gones be by-gones."

Harrington went out without look or word. Then the young lovers, after one or two exclamations of that compassion and pity which are such a sacred part of happy love, went back to their trust behind the curtains, and quite forgot, in their sacred bliss, that the hours flying so swiftly for them might be long and tedious to their kind guardians left all to themselves. When the hour of midnight struck, Lulie started with a little pang of remorse for this neglect, and peeped between the curtains.

"Why, Will!" she whispered softly. Then Will peeped forth, and then they pressed close together, and laughed. Soft as was this laughter, it was overheard. Mr. Neaves and Miss Ingram came toward them.

"He laughs best who laughs last," said Mr. Neaves, looking in triumph at young Nanse.

Miss Ingram and Lulie clasped each other.

"I know—he was at school with you," saucily whispered Lulie.

THE KAISER'S FAVORITE FLOWER.

That the blue-bottle (also called bachelor's-button) is the favorite flower of the Emperor of Germany is a well-known fact. The reason why the simple field flower should be preferred by him to other and much finer ones may not be so well known. On the occasion of a small festivity given at Königsberg, the Emperor's mother, Queen Louise, appeared in the presence of several French generals, sent by Napoleon I. to the unhappy Prussian King, in a very simple white dress, wearing some of these flowers in her hair and a small bunch of them in her corsage, much to the astonishment of the rude warriors, who did not hesitate to exchange in a loud whisper derogatory remarks about the plainness of her toilet. Turning with an indescribably sad yet dignified smile to the generals, the Queen said: "Ever since your horses have trodden down our corn-fields, gentlemen, these pretty wild flowers may well be counted among the rare treasures of my unhappy country."

That scene and the flowers connected with it belonged henceforth to the Emperor's sad but sweet reminiscences of his youthful days. When, shortly before the battle of Friedland, Queen Louise had once more to flee from Königsberg to Memel, the carriage in which she travelled with her two eldest sons, Princes Frederick William and William, lost a wheel on the road. They were obliged to alight, and being far away from any habitation, to sit down by the side of the deserted road while the damage was repaired. The little princes, being tired and very hungry, loudly bewailed their fate to the dejected mother, who did not know how to appease the wants of her children. The young and delicate Prince William in particular clung beseechingly to his dearly beloved parent, who finally rose from her grassy seat and culled blue-bottles in the adjacent fields, encouraging the two boys to follow her example. With the flowers thus plucked she twined wreaths, which occupation the princes looked on with great curiosity and interest.

The feeling of helplessness and the thought of the unhappy condition of her family, her country, and the future of the sons by her side brought tears to the mother's eyes—hot tears, which slowly trickled upon the flowers she held in her hands. Prince William, deeply touched,

threw his arms round her neck, and tried to comfort her with his child-like caresses, which brought a sweet smile on the maternal face and lips, and won for the irresistible comforter a wreath of the blue flowers upon his ten-years-old curly head. This touching road-side scene, Prince, now Emperor, William, has never forgotten. On every corn-field (this being the German name) he still thinks he sees the glitter of a maternal tear. Hence his fondness for them. Still it is not the flower alone he loves; he has also a great partiality for its color. A peculiar construction of the Emperor's eyes causes this particular shade of blue to strike it more pleasingly than any other, to such a degree, in fact, as to render him almost indifferent, nay, insensible, to all other colors. This is also the reason why he likes to surround himself with this his favorite shade, and the ladies of his court have long made it a point to appear on festive occasions in blue toilets, which not only produce an agreeable effect upon his sight, but also upon his mood, imparting to the latter that happy tinge of cheerfulness and amiability which have long become proverbial in his case.

ON THE CONGO.

The "Pall Mall Gazette" says that the interests involved on the Congo are very considerable. The imports of English manufactures are said to amount to £600,000 per annum. Two British steam companies call regularly at the mouth of the river, and the gross exports and imports are stated to amount to £2,000,000 per annum. The Portuguese claim to have twenty-five or twenty-six of the forty-nine European factories established on the Congo, and nine-tenths of the foreign population is of Portuguese origin. But English traders deny that there is a single Portuguese merchant on the Congo, and say, with the exception of a few unimportant factories on the coast north of Ambriz, Portugal has no commercial interest in the territory. Some idea of the depth of the Congo may be gained from the fact that vessels of 5000 tons burden can anchor in the stream off Vivi, 120 miles from the sea. Above Isangila the cataracts form the first serious obstacle to communication with the interior. Mr. Stanley has made a road 100 miles long past the cataracts, across which he has transported to the Upper Congo three steamers in sections.

Two steamers, the Belgique and the Esperance, trade between Vivi and the mouth of the river, the Royal plies between Manganya and Isangila, while the En Avant was launched in Stanley Pool on Dec. 3, 1881. From Stanley Pool the En Avant can steam for 800 miles into the very heart of Africa. Mr. Stanley, who left this country last December, is now on his way to the Upper Congo at the head of 300 well-armed negroes from Zanzibar. The Baptist Missionary Society has eleven missionaries, four stations and one steamboat on the river. In August, 1877, Mr. Stanley concluded his long march of 6900 miles from the east to the western coast of Africa, and arrived at the mouth of the Congo with the discovery, made at a cost of three white men and more than 250 natives of his escort, that the river Congo, or, as he called it, the Livingstone, was the most magnificent waterway in Africa, draining a watershed of 860,000 square miles, and opening a highway for European commerce to the whole of the Equatorial region of an almost unknown continent.

Why are French ladies, Parisians especially, so reluctant to appear on horseback? Because they have not the moral courage to act in opposition to an old-established conventionality. Although the attempt to do so is very gradually gaining ground, it has not yet advanced so far that a lady can mount or dismount at her door in the quarter of the Champs Elysées without being curiously scrutinized by the little crowd who have stopped on their way to witness the performance. A similar prejudice makes it improper for girls from their schooldays up to the age when they can no longer be strictly called girls—say thirty—to be seen in the streets, even two or three together, unaccompanied either by their parents, a married sister, a governess or a servant. They may be as serious as sisters of mercy, as ugly as—no, we don't mean that—as guileless as babies, they may not have entered their teens, or they may have passed them by half a dozen years, still it is not come il faut for them to go the length of a street alone. The inconvenience of always finding some one to accompany them is not taken into consideration. The absurdity of a girl who is of an age to take care of herself in other respects not being held capable of preserving her personal dignity is lost sight of. Appearances forbid it. French society, it may be argued, is peculiar. And then, ces messieurs—well, then, the sooner ces messieurs can decide to put their eyes in their pockets when modestly conducted young ladies wish to go for a walk, or on errands for their parents, the better.

IF YOU ARE RUINED

in health from any cause, especially from the use of any of the thousand nostrums that promise so largely, with long fictitious testimonials, have no fear. Resort to Hop Bitters at once, and in a short time you will have the most robust and blooming health.