



In this the art of living lies:
To want no more than may suffice,
And make that little ours;
We'll therefore relish with content
Whate'er kind Providence has sent,
Nor aim beyond our powers.

—Cotton.

A FAIR BARBARIAN.

BY FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

CHAPTER XV.—Continued.

"I feel it the civil thing to go to Oldclough oftener than I like. Go with me."

"I should like to be included in all the invitations to tea for the next six months."

"I shall be included in all the invitations so long as I remain here; and it is not likely you will be left out in the cold. After you have gone the rounds once, you won't be dropped."

"Upon the whole, it appears so," said Mr. Burmestone. "Thanks."

So, at each of the tea-parties following Lady Theobald's, the two men appeared together. The small end of the wedge being inserted into the social stratum, the rest was not so difficult. Mrs. Burnham was at once surprised and overjoyed by her discoveries of the many excellences of the man they had so hastily determined to ignore. Mrs. Abercrombie found Mr. Burmestone's manner all that could be desired. Miss Pilcher expressed the highest appreciation of his views upon feminine education and "our duty to the young in our charge." Indeed, after Mrs. Egerton's evening, the tide of public opinion turned suddenly in his favor.

Public opinion did not change, however, as far as Octavia was concerned. Having her anxiety set at rest by several encouraging paternal letters from Nevada, she began to make up her mind to enjoy herself, and was, it is to be regretted, betrayed by her youthful high spirits into the committing of numerous indiscretions. Upon each festal occasion she appeared in a new and elaborate costume; she accepted the attentions of Mr. Francis Barold, as if it were the most natural thing in the world that they should be offered; she joked—in what Mrs. Burnham designated "her Nevada way"—with the Rev. Arthur Poppleton, who appeared more frequently than had been his habit at the high teas. She played croquet with that gentleman and Mr. Barold day after day, upon the grass-plot, before the eyes gazing upon her from the neighboring windows; she managed to coerce Mr. Burmestone into joining these innocent orgies; and, in fact, to quote Miss Pilcher, there was "no limit to the shamelessness of her unfeminine conduct."

Several times much comment had been aroused by the fact that Lucia Gaston had been observed to form one of the party of players. She had indeed played with Barold, against Octavia and Mr. Poppleton, on the memorable day upon which that gentleman had taken his first lesson.

Barold had availed himself of the invitation extended to him by Octavia, upon several occasions, greatly to Miss Belinda's embarrassment. He had dropped in the evening after the curate's first call.

"Is Lady Theobald very fond of you?" Octavia had asked, in the course of this visit.

"It is very kind of her, if she is," he replied with languid irony.

"Isn't she fond enough of you to do

anything you ask her?" Octavia inquired.

"Really, I think not," he replied. "Imagine the degree of affection it requires! I am not fond enough of anyone to do anything they ask me."

Octavia bestowed a long look upon him.

"Well," she remarked, after a pause, "I believe you are not. I shouldn't think so."

Barold colored very faintly.

"I say," he said, "is that an imputation, or something of that character? It sounds like it, you know."

Octavia did not reply directly. She laughed a little.

"I want you to ask Lady Theobald to do something," she said.

"I am afraid I am not in such favor as you imagine," he said, looking slightly annoyed.

"Well, I think she won't refuse you this thing," she went on. "If she didn't loathe me so, I would ask her myself."

He deigned to smile.

"Does she loathe you?" he inquired.

"Yes," nodding. "She would not speak to me if it weren't for aunt Belinda. She thinks I am fast and loud. Do you think I am fast and loud?"

He was taken aback, and not for the first time, either. She had startled and discomposed him several times in the course of their brief acquaintance; and he always resented it, priding himself in private, as he did, upon his coolness and immobility. He could not think of the right thing to say just now, so he was silent for a second.

"Tell me the truth," she persisted. "I shall not care a much."

"I do not think you would care at all."

"Well, perhaps I shouldn't. Go on. Do you think I am fast?"

"I am happy to say I do not find you slow."

She fixed her eyes on him, smiling faintly.

"That means I am fast," she said.

"Well, no matter. Will you ask Lady Theobald what I want you to ask her?"

"I should not say you were fast at all," he said rather stily. "You have not been educated as—as Lady Theobald has educated Miss Gaston, for instance."

"I should rather think not," she replied. Then she added, very deliberately, "She has had what you might call very superior advantages, I suppose."

Her expression was totally incomprehensible to him. She spoke with the utmost seriousness, and looked down at the table.

"That is derision, I suppose," he remarked, restively.

She glanced up again.

"At all events," she said, "there is nothing to laugh at in Lucia Gaston. Will you ask Lady Theobald? I want you to ask her to let Lucia Gaston come and play croquet with us on Tuesday. She is to play with you against Mr. Poppleton and me."

"Who is Mr. Poppleton?" he asked, with some reserve. He did not exactly fancy sharing his entertainment with any ordinary outsider. After all, there was no knowing what this little American might do.

"He is the curate of the church," she replied, undisturbed. "He is very nice, and little, and neat, and blushes all over to the toes of his boots. He came to see aunt Belinda, and I asked him to come and be taught to play."

"Who is to teach him?"

"I am. I have taught at least

20 men in New York and San Francisco."

"I hope he appreciates your kindness?"

"I mean to try if I can make him forget to be frightened," she said, with a gay laugh.

It was certainly nettling to find his air of reserve and displeasure met with such inconsequent lightness. She never seemed to recognize the subtle changes of temperature expressed in his manner. Only his sense of what was due to himself prevented his being very chilly indeed; but as she went on with her gay chat, in utter ignorance of his mood, and indulged in some very pretty airy nonsense, he soon recovered himself, and almost forgot his private grievance.

Before going away, he promised to ask Lady Theobald's indulgence in the matter of Lucia's joining them in their game. One speech of Octavia's, connected with the subject, he had thought very pretty, as well as kind.

"I like Miss Gaston," she said. "I think we might be friends if Lady Theobald would let us. Her superior advantages might do me good. They might improve me," she went on, with a little laugh, "and I suppose I need improving very much. All my advantages have been of one kind."

When he had left her, she startled Miss Belinda by saying—

"I have been asking Mr. Barold if he thought I was fast; and I believe he does—in fact, I am sure he does."

"Ah, my dear, my dear!" ejaculated Miss Belinda, "what a terrible thing to say to a gentleman! What will he think?"

Octavia smiled one of her calmest smiles.

"Isn't it queer how often you say that!" she remarked. "I think I should perish if I had to pull myself up that way as you do. I just go right on, and never worry. I don't mean to do anything queer, and I don't see why anyone should think I do."

CHAPTER XVI.

Croquet.

Lucia was permitted to form one of the players in the game of croquet, being escorted to and from the scene by Francis Barold. Perhaps it occurred to Lady Theobald that the contrast of English reserve and maidenliness with the free-and-easy manners of young women from Nevada might lead to some good result.

"I trust your conduct will be such as to show that you at least have resided in a civilized land," she said. "The men of the present day may permit themselves to be amused by young persons whose demeanor might bring a blush to the cheek of a woman of forty, but it is not their habit to regard them with serious intentions."

Lucia reddened. She did not speak, though she wished very much for the courage to utter the words which rose to her lips. Lately she had found that now and then, at times when she was roused to anger, speeches of quite a clever and sarcastic nature presented themselves to her mind. She was never equal to uttering them aloud; but she felt that in time she might, because of course it was quite an advance in spirit to think them, and face, even in imagination, the probability of astounding and striking Lady Theobald dumb with their audacity.

"It ought to make me behave very well," she was saying now to herself, "to have before me the alternative of not being regarded with serious intentions. I wonder if it is Mr. Poppleton or Francis Barold who might not regard me seriously. And I wonder if they are any coarser in America than we can be in England when we try."

She enjoyed the afternoon very much, particularly the latter part of it, when Mr. Burmestone, who was passing, came in, being invited by Octavia across the privet hedge. Having paid his respects to Miss Belinda, who sat playing propriety under a laburnum tree, Mr. Burmestone crossed the grass-plot to Lucia herself. She was awaiting her "turn," and laughing at the "udent enthusiasm of Mr. Poppleton, who, under Octavia's direction, was devoting all his energies to the game: her eyes were bright, and she had lost, for the time being, her timid air of feeling herself somehow in the wrong.

"I am glad to see you here," said Mr. Burmestone.

"I am glad to be here," she answered. "It has been such a happy afternoon. Everything has seemed so bright and— and different!"

"Different" is a very good word," he said, laughing.

"It isn't a very bad one," she returned, "and it expresses a good deal."

"It does, indeed!" he commented.

"Look at Mr. Poppleton and Octavia," she began.

"Have you got to 'Octavia'?" he inquired.

She looked down and blushed.

"I shall not say 'Octavia' to grand-

mamma."

Then suddenly she glanced up at him.

"That is sly, isn't it?" she said.

"Sometimes I think I am very sly, though I am sure it is not my nature to be so. I would rather be open and candid."

"It would be better," he remarked.

"You think so?" she asked eagerly.

He could not help smiling.

"Do you ever tell untruths to Lady Theobald?" he inquired. "If you do, I shall begin to be alarmed."

"I act them," she said, blushing more deeply. "I really do—paltry sorts of untruths, you know; pretending to agree with her when I don't; pretending to like things a little when I hate them. I have been trying to improve myself lately, and once or twice it has made her very angry. She says I am disobedient and disrespectful. She asked me, one day, if it was my intention to emulate Miss Octavia Bassett. That was when I said I could not help feeling that I had wasted time in practising."

She sighed softly as she ended.

(To be continued.)

Humorous.

"I don't like a friend to domineer over me," said the young man with the patient disposition.

"Who has been doing that?"

"My room-mate. He borrowed my evening clothes."

"That's a good deal of liberty."

"I didn't mind it. But when he asked for my umbrella, I told him I might want to use it myself. But he got it just the same."

"How?"

"He simply stood on his dignity and said: 'All right; have your own way about it. They're your clothes that I'm trying to keep from getting spoiled, not mine.'"

"You look worried to-night, William," said the rural editor's wife. "Anything wrong?" "Well, rather," replied the local moulder of public opinions. "An indignant subscriber came into the office this afternoon and nearly punched the life out of our person." "My goodness!" exclaimed the power behind the press. "I hope he didn't stop his paper."