

Literature.

THEIR FIRST LODGER.

CHAPTER I.

He had no one to blame for it but himself, as Philip Morant ruefully admitted, when the few hundreds laid by for emergencies after his honeymoon trip, were sunk in an unlucky speculation.

"It was my first venture, Winnie, darling," he said to his sympathizing bride; and I faithfully promise you that it shall be my last. I also pledge myself that while I intend to make every possible effort to replace our lost nest-egg, your comforts shall not be allowed to suffer.

"As if I could be so selfish as to let you retrench and not help you!" exclaimed Winnie, indignantly. "I have begun already by giving one of the servants notice to leave. Cook is a sensible, industrious young woman, and assures me she shall be able to manage with the assistance of a boy to clean the knives, beat mats, etc. And I am going to put in practice all the economical hints dear mother has sent me; and, oh! Philip, she has made such a capital suggestion!"

Mr. Morant knit his brows, and withdrew the arm that had been thrown, caressingly around the pretty speaker.

"Then you have written Mrs. Roberts a full, true, and particular account of my folly. Was it absolutely necessary that she should be made aware of it?"

"I only said that as you had had a very heavy loss, and we should have to be more careful in our expenditure, I was afraid we must postpone our promised visit," Winnie explained, rather timidly.

She did not dwell on the disappointment to herself, nor the hopes she had cherished that a few weeks spent under the hospitable roof of her step-father would dispel the prejudices Philip had imbibed with regard to her relations.

He had met Winnie at the house of a mutual friend, and told his love before he discovered that the graceful, refined Miss Roberts was the step-daughter of a country shopkeeper.

Himself of good birth, his pride fostered by an aunt who never forgot or allowed her adopted son to forget that they could trace their pedigree to one of the Norman knights who came into England with the Conqueror, it cost him many a hidden pang when unsuspecting Winnie talked of "the shop."

And he rejoiced secretly when an infectious, though not actually dangerous, illness having attacked her younger brothers and sisters, her marriage had to be celebrated at the house of her friend; Mrs. Roberts contenting herself with a glimpse of the bride and bridegroom at luncheon, as they were on their way to the Highlands.

"What does Mrs. Roberts suggest?" he asked, rather sullenly, after a short silence, which, divining that she had vexed him, his young wife did not venture to break. "Giving up our home and contenting ourselves with a fat in some dingy suburb?"

"Oh! no, no," cried Winnie, who knew how he prized all the pretty, beautiful things they had gathered around them. "Surely, there can be no necessity to do that, dear Philip. Mother agrees with me in thinking that I can easily lay by fifteen shillings or a sovereign weekly of the money you give me for housekeeping; and if we keep no company and take a lodger—"

"A what?" exclaimed Philip, in tones that made her tremble; but having crossed the Rubicon, she summoned her courage and went on:

"Fortunately, mother can recommend us one. Here is his card," and Winnie laid a neat one before her husband, on which was inscribed the name of Maurice Valleton.

"He was organist at our church for three years," she continued, "and is such a remarkably clever musician that everyone has urged his coming to town to finish his studies at the Royal Academy of Music. He will pay us handsomely for the accommodation, and—"

"And we shall no longer be able to call our house our own," interposed Philip, bitterly. "Must I be made to pay so dearly for the one mistake? But do as you like, Winnie. If you are bent on sacrificing yourself for my sake, I know it's no use arguing against it; only remember that if I see you looking pale or weary, or have reason to think that the presence of this person militates against your happiness, he shall go directly, and I will endeavor to get some bookkeeping or translating."

"And rob me of your society in the evening! Don't meditate anything so cruel," she pleaded, earnestly. "Maurice shall have the spare bedroom and one of the parlors, and you shall not even see him unless you like; whilst I will so contrive my domestic affairs that, if I do sometimes dust a room or make a pudding, you shall not know it. Rash promises do you call these, sir? Ah! you have yet to learn what a clever woman you have wedded!"

She was fondly caressing, but her husband's features continued to wear a sombre aspect. Mrs. Roberts' suggestion galled him to an intolerable degree. To be compelled to endure the presence of a stranger beneath his roof, was a burden rendered heavier by the thought that Winnie's relatives were imposing it; that they knew how foolishly he had risked his lit-

tle all, and were doubtless making their comments upon it, and pitying his bride for having trusted her future to so rash a man.

Even this Mr.—what did they call him?—oh! Valleton, would know why he was received into the house, and he would see contempt in the fellow's eyes whenever they chanced to encounter each other.

Never had Philip Morant felt more deeply humiliated than when he came home one afternoon to find Winnie in animated conversation with a slight, dark, clever-looking young man about his own age.

He bowed stiffly in acknowledgment of the introduction; so stiffly, that Mr. Valleton bit his lip, and eyed his host dubiously.

In vain did Winnie make a diversion by calling his attention to the hamper of country delicacies the new lodger had brought with him from her mother.

Philip was more inclined to regard Mrs. Roberts' gifts as an insult, than to be grateful for them; and excusing himself on the plea of having some papers to copy, he retreated to a small room given over to his books and cigars.

Thither his wife soon followed, and strove to coax him back to the drawing room to listen to Maurice Valleton's playing, on which she descended in such glowing terms that she was abruptly checked.

"My love, I have no doubt that Mr. Valleton is a second Handel, but I am not a musical man, so pray excuse me. Oh, yes, I like to hear you sing, but that is quite a different thing."

"Not quite," she persisted, "for it was Maurice who taught me; and he and I are accustomed to sing together. We know all your favorite duets."

"I did not know I had any was the provoking reply. Another time, perhaps. But, Winnie, I thought our lodger was to have his own apartments, not to be granted the freedom of ours."

"The young wife's cheeks crimsoned.

"I was too pleased to see a familiar face from the dear old home, to think of anything else; but if you are determined to treat Maurice de haut en bas—"

"One moment, love!" and the suave tones Philip now employed were more irritating than his haughty ones. "Is it necessary to your happiness that you should desert your old acquaintances by their Christian names? Would you object to saying Mister Valleton, when you speak of this young man?"

"As you please," Winnie replied, gulping down an angry retort. "But you see, dear Philip, Maurice is not like a mere acquaintance. His father was—"

Again she was stopped.

"Thanks, but I really do not care to hear Mr. Valleton's family history; especially at the present moment. These papers must be copied and I have a thundering headache."

Winnie was all living anxiety directly. She went away when she found that her attentions were received with impatience, but it was only to come back; first with a handkerchief, steeped in eau-de-cologne, then with strong tea, then with some notes from the new lodger had recommended.

And Philip had to pretend to fall asleep in his chair, to put an end to the visits that filled him with remorse for his ill-humor.

And yet they did not banish his spleen; how could they when, at intervals, the sound of music and laughter reached his ears. Winnie was playing accompaniments to the songs Mr. Valleton trolled out in a basso profundo, or mingling her voice with his in those duets her husband had cheerfully refused to go and hear.

"It was best to begin as I mean to go on," Philip told himself. "Necessity has made me consent to letting part of my house; but it does not follow that I must be continually subjected to the presence of my tenant. It he has any sense or good breeding he will respect my reserve, and keep to his own apartments, if he does not, I shall, at the risk of affronting Mrs. Roberts, get rid of him."

But after that first rencontre, his lodger seemed quite as anxious to avoid Philip as Philip was to forget his very existence. It was only by chance they occasionally met in the hall or on the stairs, for the young musician had plunged into his work with all the energy of his nature. He had already undertaken temporary duty at a neighboring church; he had his studies to pursue, lessons to receive from an eminent professor, and concerts to attend, as well as the rehearsals of an oratorio composed by his maestro.

Where he spent his mornings, or whether Winnie was as frigidly indifferent to him as her spouse, it never entered the mind of the latter to inquire, till one morning, with a shock so sharp, so unexpected, that it seemed to take his breath away; he found, on the piano, a handsomely bound copy of Sullivan's "Golden Legend," inscribed to "Winnie," by "hers, affectionately, M. V."

CHAPTER II.

"I am not jealous," the dismayed husband assured himself. "I could not look in my darling's sweet, honest eyes and doubt her truth. She loves me sincerely; it is for my sake she has consented to receive this fellow, and is so pleased to bring me the weekly sum he pays. But he must be a sounder or how dare he sign himself 'hers, affectionately'! I have been too careless, too condescending, and this spacious rascal sees this, and is base-

ly endeavoring to rob me of her affection."

"Perhaps I have been to blame in more ways than one," was Philip's next thought. "In my distaste for his society I have often spent my evenings from home lately; and I remember now that when I apologized to Winnie she assured me she had not been dull, as she had been copying music, or practicing symphonies with Mr. Valleton. Fool that I have been to leave my innocent darling exposed to his machinations."

"Are you in the habit of accepting presents from our lodger?" he asked, holding up the book, as Winnie came into the room, looking a little pale and languid as she took her seat at the breakfast table.

She blushed, but it was angrily, and her "Why not?" was spoken in quite a defiant manner.

"I would have bought you the Legend had you hinted a wish to have it," Philip observed, in gentle reproach.

To this there was no reply, save a frigid "Thanks;" and the discussion might have ended here if Winnie had not knocked over her key basket, out of which fell a couple of half-guinea tickets for a concert to be held that evening at the Albert Hall.

"It was Philip who picked them up, enquiring, sternly:

"Where did you get these?"

Winnie threw back her head, and met his frowning gaze with an equally cold, hard one.

"They were given to me."

"By Mr. Valleton?"

"Yes, by Mr. Valleton. He had heard me say how much I wished to hear Madame Parli and Sims Reeves, and so he offered to take me; and I was only too pleased to accept."

"Mr. Valleton is very kind," said Philip, in a white heat of wrath; "but we need not trouble him. I am quite capable of escorting my wife wherever she wishes to go."

But Winnie protested against this in the most uncompromising fashion.

"If I may not go with Mab—with Mr. Valleton, I will stay at home."

"Are you serious?" her husband demanded, severely. "Do you give me to understand that you prefer this man's society to mine?"

"I will not hear him spoken of in such scornful tones," cried Winnie passionately. "Do you think I am blind to your motives, or that I am not ashamed of them? It is not for my gratification you have made this offer, but to wound the feelings of the best, the dearest fellow in the world! Yes, I will say this, for you have treated him with unparadonable rudeness ever since he came to us."

"I plead guilty to keeping Mr. Valleton at a distance, but I have not intended to be rude. This accusation is absurd. In a gossiping country town, it may be the custom to treat a lodger as one of the family, but here such familiarity is out of the question."

"Amongst strangers it may be; but when you consented to lie under obligations to Maurice Valleton—yes great obligations—mother did not hesitate to say that he could have been boarded elsewhere for half the sum that he pays us, only they both know what a help it would be to you—"

Something like an oath burst from the lips of Winnie's angry auditor, and she began to tremble before the storm she had roused.

"There has been enough of this," said Philip. "I refuse to be helped, as you so coarsely phrase it, by an insolent prig of a musician! I will return to him, even if I have to sell my watch to do it, every farthing we have received from him. And you can tell Mr. Valleton to seek accommodation elsewhere. Not another night shall he spend under my roof."

Philip went off to the City without stopping to wipe away the tears his frightened wife began to shed, or listen to her sobbing protestations, nor did he return home till an unusually late hour in the evening.

And yet Winnie's pale, terrified face had haunted him all day, and he was longing to take her to his breast and win forgiveness.

But towards Maurice Valleton he continued to cherish the greatest possible rancour.

"We were content till he came; we shall regain our loving trust in each other when we are rid of him; and by-and-by my poor little Winnie will acknowledge that it was due to my self respect, my proper pride, to take the measures she now thinks so harsh. If we must retrench, it shall not be at the expense of our domestic happiness."

When Philip Morant softly unlocked the door of his wife's sitting-room, no Winnie came hurrying to meet him; it was Maurice Valleton, who, with uplifted finger, silenced the exclamation of surprise and annoyance he was about to utter.

"Hush! Your wife is very ill—a doctor is now with her. After you went away this morning the servant found her on the floor in a swoon, and she has been light-headed ever since. I suppose I have done right in telegraphing for my mother?"

"Your mother?" repeated Philip.

"Yes, and Winnie's. You do not seem aware that she and I are half-brother and sister. Why has she never told you this?"

"Why, indeed. I ought to have been made aware of it. My ignorance of the

relationship has placed me in a false position; I—"

But here Philip's eyes fell under the keen gaze of his wife's half-brother, and the blood rushed to his brow.

He remembered how decisively he had checked all Winnie's efforts to speak of her relatives.

Ever since he learned that she was the daughter of a tradesman, he had not only held aloof himself, but tacitly compelled her to do so too.

No, it was not Winnie's fault that he declined to read Mrs. Roberts' letters, and sarcastically protested that he had no desire to hear their lodger's family history.

Nor could he feel surprised that Maurice Valleton, repelled by his hauteur, had been content to reside in his house as a stranger instead of a relative.

Before the confused and repentant Philip could collect himself sufficiently to make any response, the doctor joined them, and partially allayed his alarm.

Mrs. Morant was merely suffering from a violent nervous attack.

"She has not been feeling well for some time past," interposed Maurice Valleton, "but insisted that it would pass off, and positively refused to have medical advice."

The doctor gave his head a grave shake, and quoted the old adage of "a stitch in time often saves nine."

"However," he added, "with careful nursing, etc., and her mind kept free from any anxiety, she will soon regain her health."

But this prediction was not verified till Winnie had lain in a dangerous condition for several days. And Philip would have lost all hope of saving her, had he not been cheered and sustained by his wife's despised relatives.

Mrs. Roberts shared his vigils beside Winnie's pillow, and Maurice proved himself invaluable, so sympathetic when the bulletins were unfavorable, so pleasantly ready to participate in Philip's thankful joy when the ugly symptoms vanished.

Trouble made firm friends of the two men, whose estrangement had grieved Winnie more—far more than they had imagined.

"He would not let me tell him that Maurice is your son, dearest mother," she wailed, repeatedly. "Oh, why will he not love you all as I do! He does not know how good you are. It hurts me to have to think that Philip looks down upon my friends. I do not tell him that my heart aches, and I cry bitterly in the night, because he stops me whenever I begin to speak of you. It is my one sorrow, but it grows harder and harder to bear."

Not by one reproachful word or glance, did Mrs. Roberts add to Philip's remorse, as his unconscious wife thus sighed out her secret troubles; and Philip himself was eager to make amends for the past.

In the long evenings he and Maurice Valleton spent together, he learned that the country shopkeepers, of whom he had thought so contemptuously, were a refined, intelligent people, honored and beloved by all who knew them, and revered by their children.

"My father was a naval officer," Maurice told him, in one of their confidential chats; "but my recollections of him are not pleasant ones. My trustees have been Winnie's father, Mr. Roberts. To him I owe my education, and the happiest hours of my boyhood were spent in the old-fashioned dwelling-house behind his shop in the market-place. You must bring Winnie there as soon as she is well enough to travel."

"I will," said Philip; and he kept his word.

The false pride, that had cost his true-hearted little wife so much pain, had been bravely overthrown.

He has learned to honor those who have climbed their way to fortune by their own exertions; and his most welcome guests are Winnie's parents, and the now famous composer who was his first lodger.

BETH.

"House Nerves."

An eminent physician has discovered a new disease; or rather, a new name for an old affection, which he calls "house nerves." The disease is confined to those who remain indoors, in the house, office or store, and is due largely to an absence of outdoor air and exercise, to the terrible wear and tear of modern life, and also a lack of proper nerve food. Healthy nerves cannot exist without sunshine, pure oxygen, and exercise in the open air.

The great pressure of our modern civilization, the rush of existence, are making havoc with the nerves of our people. How often we see men and women with low spirits, brooding over wrongs which exist in imagination only!

"Our age is rich in those premature old men who, weakened by a rapidly consuming life, wander about like animated corpses, and hasten onward toward the grave." They get themselves into certain ruts and persistently stay untried, assuming an air of virtuous martyrdom, and resisting the attempts of more cheerful friends to distract them from the woes of their own making.—Helen Drew.

Appropriately Named.

It was on the Southern Pacific train a few days ago. A group of travelling men were talking stop—where they were going what they were selling, and all the trick of trade.

"I am bound for Trinity, Texas," said one of them.

"I never heard of the place," remarked another. "And, by the way, that is a very peculiar name. Why is it called Trinity?"

"Because there are only three people in it," was the response.

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