

HER HUMBLE LOVER

"And you're a fool," retorts Laura, turning upon her angrily, while Signa grows pale.

"Pardon, mademoiselle!" murmurs Jeanette, penitently. "It is true, I am a foolish one. But—and she shrugs her shoulders with a faint smile, "it did startle me, truly. In France we say that a stain of blood upon a bridal dress—"

"What on earth do we care what you say in France?" retorts Laura Derwent, vehemently. "You are an idiot! Everybody, do you hear, everybody stains her wedding dress! Go downstairs!"

"Don't be angry with her," pleads Signa, laughing, though her face is still pale. "I am not frightened! What's in an omen? Don't send her away."

But Laura is really angry, and persists.

"Yes, she must go. I can do all you want. I hate French women; they are one mass of vanity and superstition. After all has gone off so well, too—without a cloud to dim the sky, or anything, there! You'll say I'm as superstitious as she is! Never mind the stains, you can leave the dress to me. I'll get a breadth or something left in. Have you cut yourself much, dear?"

"Look!" says Signa, holding up her white hand with a laugh. "It's not so dirty as you think. It's not so broad as a church, as M. Derwent says—in fact, you can't see it! It was only a scratch, and Hector wrapped my handkerchief round it directly," and she draws the handkerchief from her pocket. The useless dainty lace trifle looks rather ghastly with the blood-stains, and Laura snatches it from her and flings it out of sight.

"It's a good thing it is no worse! If you had really cut your hand badly we should all have had a fit! There, forget it! I dare say he'll kiss it and make it well!"

"Laura!" with a crimson flush; but Laura has effected her purpose, and so rid of the subject.

"Here is your dress, my dear. Lovely, isn't it? Just what a travelling dress should be. By the way, I found a rag in the dress you took off last night."

"Give it to me!" says Signa, with a start. It was the pocket he had given her to be opened on her wedding day. "It is from Hector," she explains. "He told me to open it to-day," and she tears the envelope apart quickly, and moves to the window.

Then she utters an exclamation, and Laura, who has been folding the bridal dress, comes to her side.

"What is it, dear?"

"I—I scarcely understand," says Signa, pale and troubled. "Read it, dear. It is a deed of some sort, but—but surely it cannot mean what it says!" and she stabs off to the chair with a perplexed face.

Laura, who is not only a professional beauty, but a keen woman of business beneath her veneer of frivolity, runs her eyes over the deed; it is so short that she can do so in a minute or two; then she utters an exclamation of surprise.

"My dear, you have married a Don Quixote—a man whose standard of honor is really fabulous! There were no marriage settlements, were there?"

"No," said Signa, flinching. "Why should there have been? I was nobody, with nothing; and he—he is an earl! Why should there be settlements? It is enough that he has given me himself and his love!"

"I agree with you, my dear countess," says Laura, with a touch of gravity in her voice. "But see there are the settlements! By this deed he gives you five thousand a year, and the Grange, which, it seems, is not encumbered."

Signa does not seem surprised, only faintly troubled.

"But why—why?" she demands. Laura shrugs her shoulders, and looks down on the parchment deed.

"Because he's the most generous of men, my dear," she says. "You left—they left everything to him, and this is how he fulfills his trust! It is really a good settlement, noble! Ah! this is strange, listen to this! I give these mounds, and the said estate to Signa Derwent, as she may even absolutely do with as she may please. And I desire it to be as if she were my wife or daughter. That is strange."

"Well," says Signa, with the tears in her eyes. "Don't you see, ah, how noble he is! Even if he had died, I should have been mistress of Northwell Grange!"

Laura is silent a moment, then she looks at Signa, and weeks back, she would have been mistress of the Grange.

Grange the night of the ball! My dear, this lover and husband of yours has a knack of doing things that is simply imperial. An emperor could not be more lavish and considerate. Upon my word, you are a lucky girl."

Signa folds the deed, and puts it in her pocket. To her it simply means another token of her lover's care and regard for her, nothing more. That it makes her, the worthy woman, with a vast estate, she does not realize.

Laura induces her charge into her travelling dress, but not before the penitent Jeanette knocks at the door, announcing that Lord Delamere is ready to start.

"There, my dear, you are all ready," says the Beauty, patting the silver bracelet she has just fastened on Signa's arm, and throwing her arms around her. "And I'm awfully, awfully sorry to get rid of you, though to tell you the truth, you have cut me out most outrageously! I meant to be Countess of Delamere! There, the truth is out, and you must forgive and forget it! My dear, I fell in love with you the first day I saw him! But you'll make a better countess than I should have done, and there is such a thing as fate! Don't keep him waiting, or you'll lose the train; and mind, Signa, you are to write to me! And I hope you'll be happy, dear, but there, you are sure to be! Good-bye! I am going to kiss you now, because I shouldn't have a chance when you get downstairs, and Signa—"

"Well," says Signa, half tearfully. Laura pauses and looks rather grave.

"Well, I was going to say, don't expect too much, dear, and let bygones be bygones!"

"Well—well!" retorts Laura, hastily. "Perhaps I don't mean anything! At any rate, you have got a man who is devoted to you, and—and—he is satisfied!"

It is almost the last words she says as she hurries her down the stairs, at the foot of which the guests are all assembled to see the bride off and bid her farewell.

There are tears in Lady Rookwell's eyes as she clasps the slim, girlish figure in her arms.

"Good-bye, my dear, and be happy. Whatever you do, be happy," she whispers.

"Good-bye, Signa!" wails Archie, sobbing. "You won't be gone long! Hector says you'll be back in a month or two," as Signa's arms clasp round him.

"I trust, my dear child—ahem—that you will be happy," says the rector, unctuously. "Heaven bless you!"

While Aunt Amelia smiles and cries and tries to look as if her dearest child were being torn from her.

At last, so many are the farewells, Hector has to take the arm of his beloved and lead her to the carriage.

They drive off amid a shower of rice and shippers, and scarcely have a horseman comes from sight than a groom comes full pelt to the gate and flinging himself from his saddle, almost falls against Laura, who is standing looking at the cloud of dust raised by the pair of matchless grays.

"Am I—where is she?" he pants, white and breathless.

"Are you? Where is who?" demands Laura, regarding the dusty figure with calm, almost indignant self-possession. "Oh, it is Sir Frederic Blyte, isn't it? I beg your pardon. What is it you want?"

"I want—Signa—Miss Grenville!" he pants.

Laura laughs.

"There is no such person," she says. "Signa Grenville disappeared this morning, and Signa Countess of Delamere reigns in her stead."

"Then—then," he gasps. "I am too late!"

"Too late for the wedding, do you mean, Sir Frederic?" she says, staring. "Certainly you are. They have just started for the honeymoon."

"She and—and this man Lord Delamere?" he says, white to the lips.

"Yes, why not? She was married this morning. You ought to have been here, I say, we shall have such a wedding in Northwell for ages."

"Too late! Too late!" he groans, and he strikes his saddle with a clinched fist, and his nose grows livid with despair. "Too late! Another hour or two, and I could have saved her!"

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has anything French, if she can't speak English."

"Really?" said Signa. "Why did she marry a Frenchman?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "He might have answered, 'Because a certain Hector Delamere would not have her,' and spoken only the truth."

"And you were out, of course?" he said.

Signa laughed. "Out, of course; that is, upstairs." He smiled, then he shook his head.

"What is the matter, Hector?" I thought you did not wish me to know any of these people, and I certainly do not wish to for my own part. Other people are a bore when we are so happy by ourselves."

He nodded.

"Yes, but I'm afraid we shall have to hoist down the flag—in other words, pull down the barrier and let them in. To turn one's back upon the duchess would be to insult all Paris."

Signa laughed.

"Dreadful, indeed!" he retorted with a smile. "But it is true. A call from the duchess is like a call from royalty; one must acknowledge it or confess oneself uncivilized."

"But we have agreed to be perfectly barbaric," said Signa, smoothing the short hair with her white hand glistening with diamonds that far outshone even Lady Rookwell's. "I see what you mean, Hector, of course; but it is a nuisance, isn't it? We were so happy!"

"That's just it!" he replied. "When mortals are happy the gods are envious and always—send a Duchess D'Ornis to disturb them. We'd better get down there this afternoon; it is one of her reception-days."

Accordingly Signa's victoria, which was if anything a more perfect turnout than the duchess', came round with the pair of grays, and they were driven to the immense pile of buildings which the duchess occupied when she was in Paris. There was a string of carriages in the drive, and the victoria joined the line and had to wait some minutes until it could reach the entrance, during which time the crowd stared at the lovely English face so hard that Signa's color rose, and her veil went down.

Hector, who knew what the result of the visit would be, half smiled and half sighed as he leant back.

"Well," he thought, "I must be content; I have had her to myself all these weeks, but now the world will insist upon sharing her with me; it is only natural and reasonable, but, ah, the pity of it!"

At last the grays reached the door, and taking her on his arm, he made his way through the hall and up the stairs, crowded with visitors coming and going. Several stopped to exchange a bow or word with him, and all looked with the utmost interest at Signa; to some he just introduced her as he passed on.

As the saloon was crowded; it was more like a state reception than a lady's simple afternoon at home, and Signa looked round her very much amused and interested, listening to Hector as he pointed out in a low voice, the various celebrities. Suddenly the crowd slowly parted, and seeing that he might now get a chance of paying his respects to the great personage, Hector, with a smile, said:

"Come on, and let us get it over!" and led Signa toward the duchess. Her grace was seated at a small table, surrounded by the most distinguished people in Paris, listening to someone who was relating the last political scandal, with a half-amused, half-solemn expression on her face, when suddenly her eyes, which were slowly wandering from face to face, fell on Lord Delamere's. A quick flash came into her eyes and a dash of color into her face, leaving it pale again in a moment, and with ineffable grace she rose and extended her hand.

"Lord Delamere!" she said, "this is a happiness!"

At the sound of the title there fell a momentary silence; then they all fell talking with polite eagerness, but kept their eyes fixed on the great English earl and his wife.

"This is really good," said the duchess, as he bent over her hand. "We heard that you were unapproachable." Then her glance turned to Signa, standing calm and self-possessed, and the great lady's color came and went again with genuine admiration and surprise.

"Permit me to introduce my wife, duchess," said Lord Delamere.

Her grace bestowed a bow upon Signa, then held out her hand. At this remarkable piece of condescension and affability the crowd of courtiers stared all the harder.

(To be continued.)

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HISTORY OF RUBBER.

Indians Used Balls Many Years Ago—Vulcanizing Process.

The average man believes that rubber is rubber, just as silver is silver, and ivory is ivory, but as a matter of fact, the Indianapolis News, the different kinds of rubber run into the hundreds. Originally all rubber came from the valley of the Amazon. When it was discovered no one knows. At any rate when the first white men visited South America they found the Indians playing with balls made from the exudation of the bark of a certain tree, and these balls differed from any the Europeans had ever seen, for they bounded and rebounded and were full of life. The Indians smeared this milk of the tree on their blankets to make them waterproof.

Two hundred years and more went by, and while many wise men believed this elastic, cohesive, impermeable substance ought to be full of usefulness, nobody found any way to use it to any advantage. It was so brittle in cold weather and so disposed to get soft in hot weather, and in the fullness of time a Connecticut Yankee started to puzzle it out. It took him the better part of ten years, but he did it, and in 1839 gave the world his vulcanization process—which is in use to-day. Up to that time rubber was so cheap that ships from South America sometimes used it as ballast, taking their chances of selling it for what they could get in some American port. With the discovery of the vulcanization process, rubber took on a new value, and the tropics were searched for it everywhere. It was found in the vines of Africa, and gutta percha, a sort of first cousin to rubber, was found in Borneo, and a few years ago the Guayule shrub in Mexico.

As rubber grew in value the chemists fell to work and devised ways of recovering it from old shoes and hose and other articles into which it entered and thus "reclaimed rubber" soon came to equal the new rubber in volume; and all these varieties found some legitimate use. Gutta percha makes unapproachable insulation for ocean cables, Balata, which comes from the Guianas, is famous for belt- ing, and even "reclaimed rubber," taken from the junk heaps, serves perfectly well for flooring and mats, and other articles where resiliency is not needed.

For many years the best rubber was that which came from the banks of the Amazon. The people of that country enjoyed a practical monopoly and determined to keep it. Not a rubber seed would they let go out of the country under heavy penalties. But in 1876, by means of generous presents here and there, a venturesome Englishman sailed out of the Amazon with 70,000 rubber seeds, and that was the start of the great rubber plantations of Ceylon and the Malay peninsula. It was 29 years after these seeds left the Amazon, before the first plantation rubber was ready for the market, and then the total was only 145 tons. That was in 1905. Last year it was close to 100,000 tons.

Those who attended the international rubber exhibition held in New York in the fall of 1912 will remember the difference in appearance between the Amazon rubber and the plantation product. The first, cured in the forests over smoldering palm-logs, was smoky colored; while much of the plantation rubber from the eastern plantations, cured by the scientific application of acetic acid, was as clear as amber.

When worry is added to overwork men soon become the victims of nervous exhaustion—neurasthenia—the doctor calls it. Some have no reserve strength in their systems to bear the strain; others overtax what strength they have. If you find that you are nervous and not sure of yourself, that you sleep badly, and wake up tired and aching, your nerves are out of order. Other signs are inability to take proper interest in your work; your appetite is fickle; your back feels weak, and you are greatly depressed in spirits. One or more of these signs mean that you should take prompt steps to stop mischief by nourishing the nerves with the food they thrive on, namely, the rich, red blood made by Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. These Pills have cured thousands of cases of nervous disorders, including nervous prostration, neurasthenia, St. Vitus' dance, and partial paralysis. Here is an example: Mr. P. H. Callan, a well-known business man in Coleman, P. E. I., says: "I owe my present health, if not life itself, to Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. I had always been an active man, and when I began to run down in health paid little attention to it as I thought it only a temporary weakness. As time passed, however, I found myself growing worse, and consulted a doctor, who said that I was not only badly run down, but that my nervous system was badly shattered. I lost flesh, my appetite was poor, I slept badly and notwithstanding the doctor's treatment grew so weak that I had to leave my business and was confined to the house. Time went on and I was steadily growing weaker, and my friends were all greatly alarmed by my condition. In this condition I was strongly recommended to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and as the doctor's medicine was not helping me I decided to do so. But the time I had used three boxes I could tell that they were helping me. When I had taken eight boxes of the pills I felt able to attend to my business again, and people were surprised to see me out. I continued the use of the pills until I had taken 12 boxes, by which time I was feeling as well as I ever did, and was being congratulated by all my friends on my full restoration to health. I feel now that if I had used Dr. Williams' Pink Pills at the outset I would not only have saved much money spent in doctor's bills, but would have had renewed health sooner. I cannot speak too highly of this medicine, and would recommend it to every man who feels weak, nervous or run down."

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STRENUOUS WORK SOON TELLS ON YOU

BUSINESS MEN AND BREAD WINNERS THE VICTIMS OF NERVOUS EXHAUSTION.

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More Beans, Less Meat

In these go-hungry days there are thousands of families who find it a hard task to keep needful daily outlay within the limit of slender daily income. Do these "anilles" know beans? To say "he doesn't know beans" used to be a very common way of describing an ignorant or stupid fellow-mortal.

In these times of dear bread, dear meat, dear potatoes and dear living it may not be out of the way to ask whether the masses who are long of appetite and short of cash "know beans." Ninety per cent. of the dry matter in common shelled beans is digestible. The bean is so rich in starch and nutritious proteins that it serves as a tolerable substitute for meat. There are a hundred different ways of cooking and serving the various kinds of beans so as to make most palatable soups and solids. Why not give this finest of the legumes a more frequent placing in our daily menus?

Here follow some bean recipes:

CREAMED BEANS.

Those who are using beans as a substitute for potatoes will find this a delicious variation. Soak a pint of beans in cold water overnight. In the morning put them on in enough slightly salted water to cover and let boil until broken to pieces and very soft. The hour before meal time rub beans through colander and add to the pulp a white sauce made by cooking together a tablespoonful of butter and one of flour, pouring a large cup of milk over and stirring until thick and smooth. Mix the bean pulp thoroughly with this sauce. Lastly, beat all hot oven until light brown. Serve at once.

BEAN PUREE.

Soak one pint dried Lima beans in water overnight. In the morning drain, cover with fresh boiling water, add one teaspoonful salt, one heaping tablespoonful butter, and simmer till tender. Mash with a potato masher, add more salt if necessary, one saltspoonful paprika, two tablespoonfuls cream, and beat with a fork until smooth and creamy. Place in ramekins, cover tops with fine bread crumbs, dot with bits of butter and brown in a quick oven. A nutritious substitute for meat.

BAKED LIMA BEANS AND PORK.

Cook a four-inch square of salt pork or bacon until done, then take out and in the same water cook a quart of Lima beans, measured after shelling. When the skin curls back when you blow on it, drain beans, put pork in centre of baking dish and pile beans around. Bake until pork is browned. In the winter dried Limas may be used after soaking.

BEAN CUSTARD PIE.

Make a light short piecrust and line the pie pan with it. Have ready one cupful of Lima beans, which have been cooked in a little water until tender. Mash them through a sieve and add the well-beaten yolks of two eggs, one-half cupful of sugar, one tablespoonful of vinegar, and season with nutmeg. Mix well and pour into the bottom crust. Place in the oven and bake until firm, then cover with a meringue, made of the whites of the two eggs and adding two teaspoonfuls of powdered sugar. Replace in the oven and brown slightly.

PORK AND NEW BEANS.

Prepare two quarts stringless string beans by washing carefully, then cutting them into inch lengths. Place beans in slightly-salted boiling water and boil until tender. When done, drain and put beans in dripping pan. Have ready two pounds pork chops, lay the meat on top of the beans, season with salt and pepper. Bake in a hot oven thirty minutes or until meat is tender and browned. Serve very hot. Put roast pork chops on a platter with parsley. Put beans in a vegetable dish and pour gravy over. Make gravy of combined juices of meat and beans in bottom of baking pan.

FRIED SHELL BEANS.

This is an unusual recipe and will be found highly satisfactory. Cook shelled beans in the usual way. Make a batter of egg and cracker crumbs and dip the beans into it, frying in deep fat until brown. The fat should be very hot when the beans are put into it, and they should also be served while hot.

SALAD OF LIMA BEANS.

Soak the beans, and cook them as usual in salted water until they are done. Drain and let get very cold. Make a dressing of oil, white vinegar, salt, white pepper and a little mustard, adding to it some chopped parsley and chopped chives. Also add a sweet pepper, or pimento, chopped till very fine, and then pour over the beans.

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