



HOME MAGAZINE



An exile from home—splendor dazzles in vain,
Oh! give me my lowly thatched cottage again;
With the birds singing gaily that came at my call,—
Give me these, and the peace of mind dearer than all.

A FAIR BARBARIAN.

BY FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

"You must remember," said Lady Theobald, "that there are many things which may be done in America which would not be safe in England."

And she made the remark in an almost sepulchral tone of warning.

How Miss Belinda would have supported herself if the coach had not been announced at this juncture, it would be difficult to say. The coach was announced, and they took their departure. Mr. Barold happening to make his adieux at the same time, they were escorted by him down to the vehicle from the Blue Lion.

When he assisted them in, and closed the door, Octavia bent forward, so that the moonlight fell full on her pretty, lace-covered head and the sparkling drops in her ears.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "if you stay here at all, you must come and see us.—Aunt Belinda, ask him to come and see us."

Miss Belinda could scarcely speak. "I shall be most happy," she fluttered. "Any—friend of dear Lady Theobald's, of course."

"Don't forget," said Octavia, waving her hand.

The coach moved off, and Miss Belinda sank back into a dark corner.

"My dear," she gasped, "what will he think?"

Octavia was winding her lace scarf around her throat.

"He'll think I want him to call," she said serenely. "And I do."

CHAPTER XIII.

Intentions.

The position in which Lady Theobald found herself placed, after these occurrences, was certainly a difficult and unpleasant one. It was Mr. Francis Barold's caprice, for the time being, to develop an intimacy with Mr. Burmestone. He had, it seemed, chosen to become interested in him during their sojourn at Broadoaks. He had discovered him to be a desirable companion, and a clever, amiable fellow. This much he condescended to explain incidentally to her ladyship's self.

"I can't say I expected to meet a nice fellow or a companionable fellow," he remarked, "and I was agreeably surprised to find him both. Never says too much or too little. Never bores a man."

To this Lady Theobald could make no reply. Singularly enough, she had discovered early in their acquaintance that her wonted weapons were likely to dull their edges upon the steely coldness of Mr. Francis Barold's impassibility. In the presence of this fortunate young man, before whom his world had bowed the knee from his tenderest infancy, she lost the majesty of her demeanor. He refused to be affected by it; he was even implacable enough to show openly that it bored him, and to insinuate by his manner that he did not intend to submit to it. He entirely ignored the claim of relationship, and acted accord-

ing to the promptings of his own moods. He did not feel it at all incumbent upon him to remain at Oldclough Hall, and subject himself to the time-honored customs there in vogue. He preferred to accept Mr. Burmestone's invitation to become his guest at the handsome house he had just completed, in which he lived in bachelor splendor. Accordingly he installed himself there, and thereby complicated matters greatly.

Slowbridge found itself in a position as difficult as, and far more delicate than, Lady Theobald's. The tea-drinkings in honor of that troublesome young person, Miss Octavia Bassett, having been inaugurated by her ladyship, must go the social rounds, according to ancient custom. But what, in discretion's name, was to be done concerning Mr. Francis Barold? There was no doubt whatever that he must not be ignored; and, in that case, what difficulties presented themselves!

The mamma of the two Misses Egerton, who was a nervous and easily subjugated person, was so excited and overwrought by the prospect before her, that, in contemplating it when she wrote her invitations, she was affected to tears.

"I can assure you, Lydia," she said, "that I have not slept for three nights. I have been so harassed. Here, on one hand, is Mr. Francis Barold, who must be invited; and on the other is Mr. Burmestone, whom we cannot pass over; and here is Lady Theobald, who will turn to stone the moment she sees him,—though, goodness knows, I am sure he seems a very quiet, respectable man, and said some of the most complimentary things about your playing. And there is that dreadful girl, who is enough to give one cold chills, and who may do all sorts of things, and is certainly a living example to all respectable, well-educated girls. And the blindest of the blind could see that nothing would offend Lady Theobald more fatally than to let her be thrown with Francis Barold; and how one is to invite them into the same room, and keep them apart, I'm sure I don't know. Lady Theobald herself could not do it, and how can we be expected to? And the refreshments on my mind too; and Forbes failing on her tea-cakes, and bringing up Sally Lunns like lead."

That these misgivings were equally shared by each entertainer in prospective, might be adduced from the fact that the same afternoon Mrs. Burnham and Miss Pilcher appeared upon the scene, to consult with Mrs. Egerton on the subject.

Miss Lydia and Miss Violet being dismissed up-stairs to their practising, the three ladies sat in the darkened parlor, and talked the matter over in solemn conclave.

"I have consulted Miss Pilcher, and mentioned the affair to Mrs. Gibson," announced Mrs. Burnham. "And really we have not yet been able to arrive at any conclusion."

Mrs. Egerton shook her head tearfully. "Pray don't come to me, my dears," she said,—"don't, I beg of you! I have thought about it until my circulation has all gone wrong, and Lydia has been applying hot-water bottles to my feet all the morning. I gave it up at half-past two, and set Violet to writing invitations to one and all, let the consequences be what they may."

Miss Pilcher glanced at Mrs. Burnham, and Mrs. Burnham glanced at Miss Pilcher.

"Perhaps," Miss Pilcher suggested to her companion, "it would be as well for you to mention your impressions."

Mrs. Burnham's manner became addi-

tionally cautious. She bent forward slightly.

"My dear," she said, "has it struck you that Lady Theobald has any—intentions, so to speak?"

"Intentions?" repeated Mrs. Egerton. "Yes," with deep significance,—so to speak. "With regard to Lucia."

Mrs. Egerton looked utterly helpless.

"Dear me!" she ejaculated plaintively. "I have never had time to think of it. Dear me! With regard to Lucia!"

Mrs. Burnham became more significant still.

"And," she added, "Mr. Francis Barold."

Mrs. Egerton turned to Miss Pilcher, and saw confirmation of the fact in her countenance.

"Dear, dear!" she said. "That makes it worse than ever."

"It is certain," put in Miss Pilcher, "that the union would be a desirable one; and we have reason to remark that a deep interest in Mr. Francis Barold has been shown by Lady Theobald. He has been invited to make her house his home during his stay in Slowbridge; and, though he has not done so, the fact that he has not is due only to some inexplicable reluctance upon his own part. And we all remember that Lady Theobald once plainly intimated that she anticipated Lucia forming, in the future, a matrimonial alliance."

"Oh!" commented Mrs. Egerton, with some slight impatience, "it is all very well for Lady Theobald to have intentions for Lucia; but if the young man has none, I really don't see that her intentions will be likely to result in anything particular. And I am sure Mr. Francis Barold is not in the mood to be influenced in that way now. He is more likely to entertain himself with Octavia Bassett, who will take him out in the moonlight, and make herself agreeable to him in her American style."

Miss Pilcher and Mrs. Burnham exchanged glances again.

"My dear," said Mrs. Burnham, "he has called upon her twice since Lady Theobald's tea. They say she invites him herself, and flirts with him openly in the garden."

"Her conduct is such," said Miss Pilcher, with a shudder, "that the blinds upon the side of the seminary which faces Miss Bassett's garden are kept closed by my orders. I have young ladies under my care whose characters are in process of formation, and whose parents repose confidence in me."

"Nothing but my friendship for Belinda Bassett," remarked Mrs. Burnham, "would induce me to invite the girl to my house." Then she turned to Mrs. Egerton. "But—ahem—have you included them all in your invitations?" she observed.

Mrs. Egerton became plaintive again.

"I don't see how I could be expected to do anything else," she said. "Lady Theobald herself could not invite Mr. Francis Barold from Mr. Burmestone's house, and leave Mr. Burmestone at home. And, after all, I must say in my opinion nobody would have objected to Mr. Burmestone, in the first place, if Lady Theobald had not insisted upon it."

Mrs. Burnham reflected.

"Perhaps that is true," she admitted cautiously at length. "And it must be confessed that a man in his position is not entirely without his advantages—particularly in a place where there are but few gentlemen, and those scarcely desirable as"—

(To be continued.)

A Social Evening.

[Written for the "Advocate."]

Many a woman feels called upon to entertain her friends, and worries and frets, and is at a loss to know what to have her guests do. She thinks of cards and dancing, and decides they are not agreeable to all, and often, too often, either deprives herself and family of the benefit of social enjoyment, or invites her friends to make their own entertainments, or do without. A few weeks ago, a few of my old schoolday friends were home on their holidays, and, as I wanted to see them all, I decided to invite about twenty persons on the same evening. With my invitations, I requested each one to wear some motto or badge or part of dress to represent a familiar book by some well-known author. One young man had a beautifully-executed pen sketch of a woman with a broom in her hand ready to execute vengeance on a man who had a momentary refuge under a bed. This character was to represent Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer." Another had a sash made of the pictures of wild animals, and represented Seton Thompson's "Wild Animals I Have Known." As the guests assembled, each left his or her name, together with the name of the book that he or she represented, with the hostess. Then each guest was given a paper and pencil, and was requested to guess the book each represented. In twenty minutes, the papers were collected and a souvenir prize awarded to the competitor who had the most correct answers. None told their book, and by this time all had thrown off reserve, talked, laughed, joked freely, and were ready to enjoy themselves.

The men were then taken into another room, given twelve beans each, for twelve dollars, and told that they had to purchase partners for the next game. A witty fellow of the number was appointed auctioneer. A sheet was hung across the door, under which each lady in turn presented one dainty foot, and the auction sale began. The auctioneer laid a reserve bid of seven dollars on each, and bidding soon became furious, until each had a partner. Then each couple were given a paper containing thirteen questions, called "The Floral Love Tale," blank spaces being left for answers.

1. The maiden's name and the color of her hair.—"Marigold."
2. An adjective that describes her, and her lover's name.—"Sweet William."
3. When they met.—"4 o'clock."
4. What she wore on her dainty feet.—"Lady's Slipper."
5. Love at first sight.—"Passion Flower."
6. What ghastly trophy did he bring her?—"Bleeding heart."
7. To whom did she refer him?—"Poppy."
8. What did she give him as he knelt before her?—"Heart's Ease."
9. Where did he imprint the betrothal kiss?—"Tulips."
10. What he said in parting.—"Forget-me-not."
11. What were the wedding bells?—"Blue Bells."
12. What bonbons did he send her?—"Candytuft."