



The Countess of London.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

As Madge and Irene drove up to the Towers the luncheon-bell rang.

"How quickly the morning has gone!" said Irene. "You won't be long, Madge, dear? And oh!" she added, "how would it be for you to give madame her bracelet? That is rather a happy idea, for she can scarcely scold you about the coat at the moment you are restoring her valuable property;" and she laughed.

Madge would have liked to have declined; but she said nothing, and took the bracelet.

As she prepared herself for lunch, she thought of Royce and the troubled look on his face, and her heart beat fast as she heard him enter the next room. She opened the door. He had thrown himself into a chair, and was looking down at his boots in a thoughtful, preoccupied fashion; but at the sight of her his face cleared, and he nodded and smiled lovingly.

"Halloo, Madge!" he said. "Nearly ready? I'm rather late; but the tailor kept me—would talk about the first pair of riding-breeches he made for me, poor old chap!"

She went up to him and put her arm round his neck with a sweet timidity which would have melted an anchorite.

"You are not angry with me, Royce?" she whispered.

"Angry with you, my darling?" he echoed, drawing her down to him and kissing her. "Why should I be angry?"

"Because of my riding the colt," she said in a low voice. "I saw that you knew—that the countess had told you."

His brows knit.

"Yes, my mother told me," he said, reluctantly. "It was rather unfortunate that she should see you; but it doesn't matter. I mean there was nothing to be ashamed of—to make a fuss about; only—he hesitated, then laughed, but shortly, as if the subject were unpleasant—"only, you see, madame hasn't met with a woman who can ride as well and easily as you, Madge, and—"

But there; don't let the matter trouble you for a moment. And the whole thing wouldn't have been noticed but that Seymour—his face darkened—"happened to see you, and he indulged in some of his pleasant sarcasm, and so to speak, worked my mother into one of her fits of passion."

Madge sighed.

"And you had to bear it all, Royce!" she murmured; "and you will have to bear all the blame for my misdeeds and mistakes all the way through. Ah!" and she turned away from him; but he still held her.

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dery! I would have given the world to have done it, and I wanted to try, but she would not let me."

Madge looked gratefully at her. "She is my guardian angel!" she said to Royce in a low voice.

The meal—a far less stately one than dinner—proceeded, the countess scarcely opening her lips, and Madge being almost as silent. Presently Seymour said:

"I have been telling madame that we ought to give a dance in honor of the bride;" and he smiled at Madge.

Royce looked up quickly. He understood at once that Seymour was planning some fresh mortification for Madge.

"There is no need for anything of the kind," he said.

"I don't agree with you, my dear Royce," said Seymour. "It will be an excellent way of introducing Madge to our friends and neighbors; and madame agrees with me, do you not?"

The countess inclined her head.

"Royce can do as he pleases," she said, coldly.

Royce bit his lip, but he was too proud to offer any further opposition.

"Very well," he said. "Would you like it, Madge?"

She looked round at them, and then at him.

"I," she said in a low voice. "Certainly," put in Seymour. "We must all study your wishes, my dear Madge."

She still looked round with troubled indecision, and Irene hastened to her rescue.

"Madge would like it, I am sure," she said, thinking that the ordeal of an introduction would be easier for her if it came in the lump, so to speak.

"It is a long time since there was a ball at Monk Towers."

"Very well," said Seymour. "Only you must have it soon, please, for I shall have to go to town."

"Thank Heaven!" growled Royce, under his breath.

"We will send out the invitations at once," said Irene, cheerfully.

"Do you know the new waltz?" asked Seymour of Madge.

"If she does not," Irene replied for her quickly. "I can teach her, it is very easy, and Madge will dance as well as she can ride, I am sure."

No more was said, and presently the countess rose.

"Give her the bracelet now, Madge," whispered Irene, as they followed her into the ladies' boudoir, a smaller apartment than the drawing-room.

The countess seated herself upon a low chair, with some fancy-work, and Madge, with a faint color in her face, went up to her.

"I have something to give you, madame," she said, standing beside her with downcast eyes.

The countess looked up at her with cold surprise.

"Something to give me?" she said.

"Yes, madame," said Madge, and she held out the bracelet.

The countess glanced at it and up at the beautiful face above her with haughty indifference.

"It is mine, yes," she said. "Where did you find it?"

"In the parlor of the cottage on the moor," replied Madge. "Mrs. Hooper's, madame."

(to be continued.)

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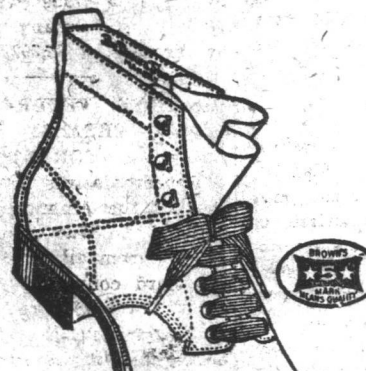
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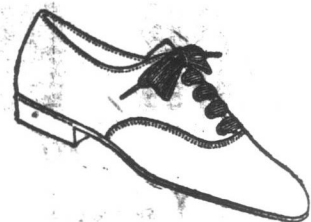
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SIDE TALKS.

By Ruth Cameron.

THE WET-BLANKET PERMISSION.

Mother was a very busy in the kitchen. There was to be company for dinner and all sorts of good things were in savory process of cooking in the big range. The there were many things to be thought of, too. If the flowers for the table didn't arrive pretty soon, the florist ought to be called and reminded to get them out on time; she mustn't forget to polish the silver carving set in some spare moment and fill the silver pepper and salts; and make the Russian dressing for the salad and set it away in the refrigerator; and watch the rolls that they don't rise too much; and the cake; oh goodness, the cake! Maybe it had baked too long already.



Help for Baby SCOTT'S EMULSION Builds Strong Bones

She rushed to the oven and peered anxiously in—sure enough it was too brown on one side, and just then came the voice of small Mary from the doorway. "Oh, Mother, the girls are going down on the river flats to get pussy willows. May I go, too?"

"Oh, I don't care."

One more thing to worry about! Mother always feels so much safer when Mary is around home. She might fall out of a tree and get hurt, or tear her dress, or she might get her feet wet and catch cold—oh why did she have to ask to go just this particular time when there is so much else on mother's mind. She might be needed to go to the store, too. "Please Mother, I want to go over so much."

And then all mother's pent up tenderness and her annoyance over the cake, spill out in an ungracious assent. "Oh, I don't care. Go if you want to."

Silence from the doorway. Mary and her trip for pussy willows are forgotten in the busy work of cooking. Once more till presently mother looks up and sees the little, disappointed figure still standing there. "I said you could go, Mary, didn't you hear?"

"When You Let Me Like That."

"Yes, but I don't feel like going when you just say you 'don't care!' I thought you'd be glad I was going to have some fun and bring you some pussies besides. I don't want to go when you let me like that."

I think children are more sensitive to ungraciousness even than grown-ups; and yet so often they meet with this grudging assent to their little requests.

"I'd almost rather have mother say, 'No,'" said a high school girl to me the other day, "than to have her say, 'Oh, I don't care!' It sounds as if she didn't really want me to do it, or at least had no interest in whether I enjoyed myself or not."

I know that mothers are ever anxious about the safety and welfare of their daughters at any age, when they are out from under her sheltering wings, and it is always that fear

and not a lack of interest that tinges her tone with ungraciousness. It is as if by this impatient: "I don't care," the mother washed her hands of any responsibility in case harm comes of the adventure. It leaves her a loop hole to say, "Well, I wasn't at all keen about your going in the first place."

"Just As Well Pleased!"

A mother talking to me on this subject not long ago, said: "Gertrude isn't going to the Y.W. dance to-night and just as well pleased. Of course I know she is in good company and all that, and I've never said she couldn't go. But I don't like her to be out in the evening, and she knows it, I always worry and sit up till she comes in and I can't afford to without my sleep, hard as I work over since her father died. So she said they are out from under her sheltering wings, and it is always that fear

as well pleased."

What a pity for mother love solicitude to deteriorate into a meddling, worrying obstacle in the way of a beloved daughter's innocent times.

If you consent to the childish pleasures, be gracious about it—interested, too, both for their sake and your own. It's the best possible way to keep their confidence and trust.

And remember what a poet said of this subject many years ago, "The world without the giver is bare."

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