

## IN SPITE OF ALL.

By IDA LEMON, Author of "The Charming Cora," "A Winter Garment," etc.

## CHAPTER XI.



s for five years Mr. Musgrove had been master of a house with a staff of well-trained servants, his old nurse being established as house-keeper,

as moreover everything about him evidenced solid comfort and luxury (a man's luxury—a woman has a different idea of it), Mrs. Swannington could find no cause to pity him as a helpless bachelor. There were no evidences that a lady's care was needed in the house. The dinner was excellent, as gentlemen's dinner-parties are apt to be, and the late Mr. Musgrove having been a connoisseur in wines, and having always a well-stocked cellar, the guests of the son never had any reason to complain on that score. Mrs. Coverdale, a beautiful but rather cold young woman, acted as hostess, but it was evident her brother could do very well without her. He was a courteous, attentive, and even charming host, and Mrs. Swannington was in ecstasies. To Beattie his manner was, or so she thought, markedly warm, and when, during the course of conversation, he mentioned a hope that one day soon she would spend a day on his house-boat, Aunt Ella felt that matters were progressing as favourably as the most anxious could desire. After dinner not even Mrs. Coverdale's ill-disguised boredom, for she was a woman who turned down the light when only other women were present, could chill the sanguine lady, and her spirits were higher than ever when, on the entrance of the gentlemen, Mr. Musgrove went at once to Beattie and proceeded to show her some of the pictures in the drawing-room, many of which were really valuable, and to explain to her the identity of various members of his family, who were represented by some lovely miniatures. Mr. Musgrove's present position, as evidenced by his surroundings, was sufficiently satisfactory, but coupled with the prospects for his future held out by the Gilmans, who had spoken of his own talents and the expected inheritance of his aunt's wealth, it was almost equal to her ambition. Moreover, Mr. Coverdale, who was as talkative as his wife was silent, and was the personification of a snob, did not fail to impress Mrs. Swannington by constant mention of important and aristocratic acquaintances of his own. Indeed, before the evening

was over the little lady was persuaded that Beattie would before long be moving in a sphere where millionaires were common, and where people of title and consequence would combine to do her homage. As the niece rose in importance so would the aunt, and Mrs. Swannington determined that, however brilliant the assemblies in which she might by-and-by take part, neither her diamonds nor her dresses should be unworthy of notice.

Of all that was going on in Mrs. Swannington's active mind, stimulated by his old wine and strong coffee, Mr. Cecil Musgrove was sublimely unconscious. And for that matter he was unaware that he had given her any cause for the wild imaginings in which she was indulging. He was a man past thirty, and having been for some years independent, he was in the habit of inviting to his house anyone who interested him, or of whom he desired to see more. Beattie was not the first young lady who had partaken of his hospitality. Perhaps Aunt Ella was not the first relative who had planned plans and dreamed dreams. To this man, who had been in society for nearly fifteen years, and seen a good deal of life in one way and another, Beattie was little more than a beautiful child. It is true he had taken a fancy to her, and it is possible he might have a fleeting notion now and then of future possibilities, but he was a man who acted deliberately and carefully, with much premeditation and keen insight into probable developments. He was the last person to marry in haste, fully understanding that there is such a thing as repenting at leisure. He was too much of a gentleman to allow any girl to be spoken of in connection with himself through indiscreet attentions, and if it had not been that the wish was father to the thought, neither Mrs. Swannington, nor subsequently Mrs. Gilman, would have made up their minds that he was devoted to Beattie. Most certainly Beattie herself would have been the last to think of such a thing. She liked Mr. Musgrove, but was not in the least disposed to be sentimental about him. As they drove home that evening she talked about him and his surroundings with perfect frankness, and her appreciation was expressed without any reserve. Aunt Ella listened and smiled and nodded from time to time at Uncle Arthur, who was dozing on the opposite seat, and on whom her pantomimic comments were utterly thrown away.

Beattie was taking home with her a parcel of books which Mr. Musgrove had asked to be allowed to lend her. He had soon discovered that her mind was somewhat uninstructed, and being himself a man of literary tastes he took a pleasure in introducing others to his favourite authors. It needed little discernment to ascertain that neither of the guardians of Miss Margetson would do

much for her intellectual development, and it gratified Cecil Musgrove to do something towards forming the taste and educating the mind of this charming young lady. He saw that she was by no means wanting in intelligence, and he thought it would be interesting to watch her growth. He had always lamented in his sisters that they had been satisfied with their good looks to achieve success in life, and prophesied that when they had attained middle-age they would be considered stupid. "A beautiful woman without a mind is a perpetual disappointment," he would say. "She attracts only to weary." And so, to save Beattie from such a condition of empty-headedness, he sent her away with a volume of Ruskin, some selected poems, and the translation of a beautiful little Italian story of which he begged her acceptance.

With this part of the evening's programme, Aunt Ella, if not in sympathy, was far from displeased. If Mr. Musgrove had suggested that Beattie should learn Hebrew she would have taken it as a sign of personal interest and at once ordered a grammar. "Of course," she thought, "if he wants a wife that cares about books, Beattie will have to read them. In the position she will occupy she will have to meet clever people, and though for my part I always consider the men, and still more the women, who are called clever the stupidest of all, still I suppose they understand one another."

So, with motives more disinterested than Mrs. Swannington gave him credit for, Mr. Musgrove began the task of instructing Beattie, an employment not without fascination to himself and altogether beneficial to Beattie. She had neither time nor inclination for much study, but she was an eminently teachable person, and gradually the contact with the thoughts of loftier minds than those of common men, the breathing from time to time of an atmosphere purer and fresher than that of the every-day world, began unconsciously to affect her. In the world of thought there are those who sow in tears and reap in joy their harvest; but there are gleaners too who have neither ploughed, nor sown, nor reaped, nor borne the burden and heat of the day, but they come upon the field and gather here and there a little, and go away the richer. Of such as these was Beattie.

Just about this time too she had been seeing something of Norah. To Norah the life of the intellect was as nothing to the life of the spirit, but there are points where the two come close. This must be so, seeing that all beauty and all nobleness comes from the Father of Light, and Beattie found as she became better acquainted with her girl friend that that which was all new to her was familiar to Norah, who had read a great deal and instinctively