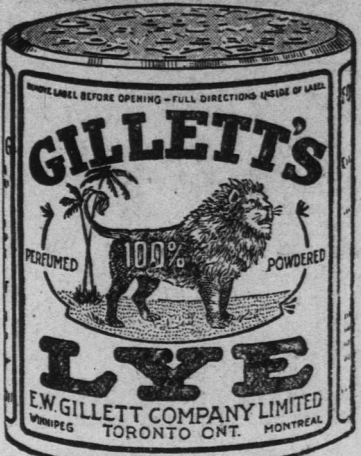


GILLETT'S LYE EATS DIRT



Aubrey's Revenge.

CHAPTER XIX.

"And an ugly duckling in the bargain," supplemented Mrs. Snadragon.

"Precisely," laughed her mistress, "and she turns out to be a beauty, with the manners and accomplishments of a princess. Well, it is certainly delightful. I have quite fallen in love with the dear child. Poor Aubrey is green with jealousy."

The Snadragon's yellow eyes gleamed as she replied:

"I told Miss Aubrey a while ago that her nose was out of joint now, and she threatened to strike me with her silver hairbrush. She's got a temper as sweet as honey, Miss Aubrey has."

"What a spiteful creature you are, Snadragon! You're like a wasp, ready to sting whenever you get a chance. Hand me my bon-bon box, and get me something nice and bathe my head; it has ached dreadfully for the last hour. The Vancouver will be here for dinner, and I shall look a fright—I always do when I've had a headache."

The woman put aside the fine old lace she was mending, and, taking a silver box from the mantel, set it before her mistress.

"I've never heard that sugarplums were good for headache, ma'am," she remarked sentimentally.

"Neither have I," said the lady. "Don't be snappish, Snadragon. I wouldn't touch a morsel of sweet stuff for the universe, but it is time these precious pets had their lunch. Here Snip, here Snap, wake up and get something nice."

At the sound of the lady's voice there was a sudden movement amid the silken cushions, on which her daintily slipped feet rested, and simultaneously two fluffy heads, which might have been mistaken for balls of woolen yarn but for the tiny pink noses and diamond-bright eyes that gave them life and expression, popped up, and a succession of shrill barks followed.

"Oh, you darlings!" cried their mistress delightedly, and, gathering the two little animals up in her arms, she clasped them to her bosom and covered their woolly little bodies with kisses.

Snip and Snap were selfish little beasts, however, and did not seem to appreciate the devotion of their mistress in the least. They squirmed and snarled, snapping at the lady's jeweled hands and at each other, and, as a last resort, broke forth into pitiful whining.

"Hush!" cried the Snadragon, in a temper. "Hush this instant, you pampered little wretches. This is a fine way to cure your headache,

ma'am, I must say. Get out, you pests!"

"No, no; let the little loves alone, Snadragon," cried the mistress. "You shan't scold them like that. Here, Snip, here, Snap, sit up and beg, and you shall have your bonbons."

Thus admonished, the two little dogs sprang on the table, and, sitting up on their hind legs, held up their forepaws beseechingly, giving utterance to queer little entreating sounds.

"Hear the darlings beg!" cried the lady. "They're the cleverest little dears in the world, aren't they, Snadragon?"

"They're a bit too clever," the woman replied; "look, ma'am, they're putting their noses in the bonbon box."

"Well, what if they are? Their dear little noses are nice. Help yourselves, doggies."

The little beasts took a sugarplum apiece, and leaping down, went scurrying across the room, the silver bells about their woolly necks jingling furiously.

Mrs. van Cortlandt clapped her hands to her head.

"No wonder your head aches, ma'am," said her attendant, approaching with a gold-stoppered flask in her hand, "when you have such a din as that about your ears. Let me put out the dogs?"

"No, no, let them alone. I'd rather suffer than have my precious little pets banished; they're all I have to love in the world."

"You forget that you've got a daughter now, ma'am."

"No, I don't, but hold your tongue, Snadragon, and do something for my poor head."

The woman shrugged her shoulders and her yellow eyes gleamed as she went softly behind her mistress' chair and began to take down her hair.

It was beautiful hair, soft and abundant, and of that peculiar tint of gray so becoming to a woman of middle age.

Mrs. van Cortlandt was proud of her hair, prouder than she had ever been in her youthful days, when it was as black as a raven's wing.

"Ah-h, how soothing that is," she sighed, as the woman bathed her temples with a cool, evaporant, fragrant liquid. "There is magic in the tips of your fingers, my good Snadragon."

"And a sting on the tip of my tongue, ma'am," added the woman, with a shrug.

"Precisely," laughed her mistress. "But I don't object to that; I rather like a sharp-tongued woman. Am I looking dreadfully old to-day, Snadragon?"

"You've neglected your massage treatment of late, and the crow's-feet under your eyes are a trifle more noticeable than usual; but I can remedy that. I suppose you want to look your best to-night?"

"My very best, Snadragon."

"Is it to be a large dinner party, ma'am?"

"Oh, no, not more than a dozen, and a box party afterward, but the Vancouver will be here—"

"And you wish to impress them, ma'am?"

"Snadragon, you're a treasure. You divine my wishes before they take shape in my own mind. I wish to impress, overwhelm, overawe those pretentious people, and I look to you to manage it. Now, my good Snadragon, tell me what I shall wear?"

"Your black velvet, of course, ma'am."

"And my diamonds?"

The Snadragon shook her head

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with emphasis.

"Not for the world, ma'am."

"Not wear my diamonds?" cried Mrs. van Cortlandt, aghast. "Why, they cost—"

"Yes, ma'am, I know, and they'll be just the thing for your ball, but you mustn't wear a jewel for dinner but your rings and the diamond aigrette in your hair."

"Well, well!" sighed the lady, "I had set my heart on showing off my diamonds. You'll be telling me presently that my daughter shan't wear the rubies I bought for her yesterday, the very finest ever seen in New York."

Snadragon threw up her hands and laughed shrilly.

"Why, of course she mustn't dream of wearing them!" she cried. "Fancy a slip of a girl, not yet out of her teens, wearing rubies at a quiet dinner! I'll tell you what Miss van Cortlandt will wear, ma'am: that rose-tinted mousseline de sole, with lace, and pink roses, and not a single jewel but the necklace of pearls you gave her this morning."

"A mere trifle," said the lady. "that only cost a few hundred. Great heavens, Snadragon, what a poky old Puritan you are, to be sure."

"Better be a poky old Puritan, ma'am, than an overdressed parvenue," retorted the woman. "But you are firing yourself out with all this useless talk. If I'm to manage matters to-night, you must let me have my own way about it, ma'am."

CHAPTER XX.

Kelpie had been at Van Cortlandt's place just one week, but she had not quite decided whether she preferred the life of a grand lady or not. In some respects it pleased her immensely, in others she found it dreadfully tiresome.

"If I only had wings like a dove, wouldn't I go fluttering back to the old lighthouse through all this whirling white snow," she was saying to herself as she stood at the window of her luxuriously appointed room, looking out at the wild November storm.

"I can fancy how the sea will roar and toss, and how lonesome it will be up in the old watch room, and I'm sure daddy and Tom would be glad to see me."

"I haven't made up my mind yet whether I like this sort of life or not. Lounging around in this aimless fashion, with nothing to do but eat and sleep, and letting other people wait on you, seems awfully stupid. Mrs. van Cortlandt gave me orders at lunch to go to my room and take a nap, so I might be fresh and wide awake for her dinner party to-night, but sleep is quite out of the question. I've never been used to taking naps. I feel dreadfully dull and stupid from want of exercise; if I were at the dear old tower I should skip down and take a sharp little row and be all right."

"A run down that quiet-looking street below would quite set me on my feet," she went on, pressing her face against the glass, and looking longingly down at the whirling snow.

"I wonder what my lady mother would say if I should attempt it? It would be heavenly to escape from this hot, stuffy room, if only for a

moment. The Snadragon would find it out, of course. She has eyes in the back of her head, but they could not do worse than send me back to daddy and Tom, and I shouldn't be heartbroken."

"Let's see," she continued, consulting the jeweled watch in her girdle, "three o'clock, and the dressing bell won't ring till five; two endless hours. I'll do it; a run in the fresh air will give me an appetite for that wonderful dinner party I've heard so much about."

"Mrs. van Cortlandt's dreadfully afraid I shan't know how to behave myself," she went on, her bright eyes dancing. "I should like to shock her ladyship by putting my knife in my mouth, or pouring my coffee in the saucer. It's wicked, I know, but she isn't my mother, and there's no use in her pretending to be. I'm dear old daddy's granddaughter, and all the powers under the sun can't make me believe otherwise."

Kelpie's lips quivered and her eyes filled with tears, but she winked them away, and, going into an adjoining room, opened the door of a huge wardrobe and glanced over its contents. There were gloves of every description, from tailor-made suits to fluffy, filmy gauzes that looked like summer mist, all provided by Mrs. van Cortlandt's lavish hand.

"She is very good to me, and I ought to be grateful," thought Kelpie, "but I can't believe she's my mother, all the same."

"Ah, this is just the thing," she said, and taking down a fur-lined storm cloak, she enveloped herself from head to foot, pulling the close-fitting hood over her head. "It will be no end of a lark, as Tom would say."

She left the room with a light step, closed the door behind her, and went boldly down the front stairs, but not through the gorgeous vestibule that led to the street door, lest the stately footman should be on guard.

Trembling with excitement, she turned toward the music room, and made her way out by a side door leading through a small courtyard into the very street she had looked down upon with such wistful longing.

A stiff wind was whirling the fast-falling snow in every direction, and for an instant Kelpie almost lost her breath. But she rallied speedily and went on at a brisk pace. She had been longing for freedom for days, and she found the strong, fresh wind and the cold touch of the snow-flakes delightful.

It reminded her of a storm at sea, when she used to go out on the parapet and the wild winds tossed her hair and the white foam beat in her face.

(To be Continued.)

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