

LADY AYLMER.

CHAPTER X. MISCHIEF.

Amelia Harris proved to be all that Lord Aylmer had said she was—a strong, active and capable woman, quiet, a good cook, neat in appearance and respectful in manner. She took the orders for the day from Miss Brand, and went off about 11 o'clock to get various things that were wanted, and among other errands she had a telegraph form to hand in at the post office.

It was from Esther Brand to Richard Harris, and announced briefly but to the point: "Son; both well."

"It will cost a good bit, Amelia," Miss Brand said. "I don't know exactly what but they will tell you at the post office. And, by the bye, you might bring back a dozen stamps for India. We shall be writing to Mr. Harris by each mail."

"Yes, madam," Amelia Harris answered. And Amelia Harris was perfectly right, for just as she was passing the Knightsbridge Barracks on her way cityward, Lord Aylmer's carriage stopped at the door of Palace Mansions. Esther saw it draw up.

"Nurse, she said, going softly into the little dressing-room, where the nurse sat, crooning over the baby by the fire, "will you answer the door for me—Amelia has gone? It is Lord Aylmer."

The mere mention of a lord was sufficient to send the nurse off to the door in a bustle, perhaps the good woman scented a tip in the near future. Anyway, when the door was opened to the great man, he was astonished to see a stout, comfortable-looking body standing smiling and curtsying within.

"Yes, my lord—walk this way, my lord," and forthwith she ushered him into the drawing-room, and went back to the dressing-room to relieve Esther of the baby. "A very fine-looking old gentleman, Miss," she remarked.

"Is he?" said Esther. "No, I've never seen him."

"Good morning, Lord Aylmer," she said, cordially. "I must thank you for all your kindness to my little cousin, who is very lonely just now. My name is Brand—Esther Brand."

Lord Aylmer could not help starting a little, but he covered it by a profound bow and a protestation that he was delighted—enchanted, in fact—to have the honor of making Miss Brand's acquaintance.

"And shall I not have the pleasure of seeing Mrs.—er Harris this morning?" he asked, finding presently that there was no sign of Dorothy's appearance.

Miss Brand laughed. "Well, hardly," she answered. "My cousin is as well as could possibly be expected under the circumstances."

"What circumstances?" Lord Aylmer asked, thinking that Miss Brand was alluding to Barbara's accident.

"The circumstance of a baby," said Esther, smiling.

"Of what? Forgive me, but I do not follow you," he said.

"My cousin has got a baby, Lord Aylmer," said Esther, smiling still more broadly.

Lord Aylmer jumped to his feet. Esther, not a little startled, sprang to hers.

"What?" he cried.

Mrs. Harris had a little son born at four o'clock this morning," said Esther, who neither understood nor particularly admired his unlooked-for and uncalled-for display of feeling.

"Good God!" burst from the old lord's lips.

For a few moments they stood staring into one another's eyes, he astounded, disgusted, baffled; she puzzled and a little angry at his unusual and extraordinary behavior. Of the two, the old lord was the first to recover himself.

"And not too much upset by the accident to the poor old lady yesterday, I hope?" he inquired tenderly.

"Oh, no. Of course she was upset at the time, but she was wonderfully calm and quiet after I got here."

"And my valet's wife—Amelia Harris—how does she like her?" he asked.

"Well, really, Lord Aylmer, she hardly knows. Amelia came in, and I had to send her off for the doctor almost before my cousin saw her. But I like her and find her very useful, in fact, we should be, but very badly off to-day but for her."

"That is good," Lord Aylmer said with his most fatherly manner.

He rose to go then, and held out his hand to his enemy. "I am not only glad but greatly relieved that Mrs. Harris is able to make herself useful, because I feel that I am in a measure responsible for the accident to your cousin's servant. I shall be quite anxious to hear how she goes on—your cousin, I mean. I wonder, if you could send me a line now and again to Aylmer's Field, near Norwich? I should be so much obliged."

"Oh, certainly I will let you know; it is very good of you to be so interested," Esther answered.

"Ah! that is good of you. I am an old man now, and it is the distressing habit of old people to worry themselves about everything. I shall worry more or less about your cousin until I know she is about again."

He went hastily away after this, chuckling at the success of his visit. "I thought she was going to be difficult," his thoughts ran; "but she's a woman, and after all, the same bats catch all of them—all of them. There are two things a woman never seems able to resist—diamonds and a really smart turn-out."

He sat still for a few minutes after they turned into the High Street, then called to Charles. "Charles drive slowly from here to St. George's Hospital," he said.

The old lord was in Dick's way, for just as they reached the corner of the hospital Amelia Harris came out of the big building. She saw him in a moment, and Lord Aylmer called out for the carriage to stop. The carriage drew up close beside the curb, and Amelia Harris stood quite close to the door, so that not a word of her conversation could be heard by the two still and solemn figures who sat with their heads

carefully turned away from the wicked old man behind them.

"Well?" he said, looking at him in a hard, dry kind of way, "have you been there?"

"Yes."

"H'm! nice little surprise for you, I should fancy."

"Oh, a devil of a surprise," irritably Amelia Harris laughed cynically. "Ah! I've been wondering all the morning what you'd think. Well," sharply, "does it make any difference, or are you going on, because if it does—"

"Well?"

"Well, I'll send on this telegram and give her this letter. Poor little fool! she has been worrying about the Indian mail all the morning."

"You will do nothing of the kind; of course I am going on!" cried Lord Aylmer, sharply, under his breath. "Give them to me—what are they? There—that will do. Go back—take a cab—and look after my interests as if—this—creature had not come at all to interfere with my plans. If anything of importance occurs, write to me at Aylmer's Field. If you need to use the telegraph, be very careful how you word your message."

"On the old plan, I suppose?" she asked.

"Yes; now go. Charles, to my club."

"Yes, m'lord."

Being September, the old lord found his favorite club almost deserted—not that he minded, in fact, he wanted the club to himself, and practically he had it. He did not waste time, but read the telegram at once.

"Boy—both well," with a sneer, and tore it into a thousand fragments, which he flung into the grate. Then he opened the letter, in Dick's well-known writing, bearing the Madras post mark.

It was a long and tender letter, full of solicitude for her welfare and giving her amusing descriptions of his every-day life.

"Madras isn't much of a place, my darling," Dick said, "but I shall like it well enough when you are out here."

"Good God!" Lord Aylmer cried, aloud, "then she means going out to him! So that's your game is it, my little white cat? Ah! we must see if we can't make a change in that programme."

"All the same," the letter continued, "I have got most comfortable quarters here, and I have seen a jolly little house about a mile from the town, where I think you will be as happy as possible. I am looking out for a first-rate ayah for you, but really I fancy it will be the easiest if you get an ayah for the child in town—there are always some who have taken children over and want their return passage. You see, my darling, I have not been idle about you, nor forgotten to make the best of my opportunities in gathering information which may make you more comfortable, though I think sometimes that people must wonder why I want to know about ayahs and nurses."

He roused himself presently, and went to the table where writing materials were lying. Then he forced himself to write an ordinary letter to Dick, telling him he was in town for a few days; but was off to Aylmer's Field to-morrow, that his lady was better, and he trusted Dick would bear in mind that he had reinstated himself in his uncle's good graces that he might get over the disappointment caused by his refusal to marry Mary Annandale, and therefore he trusted he would spare no pains to make himself indispensable to his old friend, Barry Boynton. And at the end of this meaningless and commonplace letter, Lord Aylmer made an addition which, like the scorpion's tail, contained the sting.

"P. S.—By the bye, you will be interested to hear that your little friend, Mrs. Harris, has consoled herself for your absence, without loss of time. I saw her yesterday with a gentleman in an uncommonly well-turned-out open carriage—splendid horses, smart servants in white liveries, cockades, and all the rest of it. After a long and intimate acquaintance with the world, I have come to the conclusion that soft-eyed little women of that type have marvellous wisdom—they forget the past, give no thought of the future, take the hour as it comes and make the best of it. Sensible creatures!"

And this most dangerous of all lies, the lie which was half a truth, Lord Aylmer dropped into the post-box, and in due time it went speeding over sea and land in place of Esther Brand's telegram. "Boy—both well."

CHAPTER XI.
SUSPENSE.

A whole month had gone by and still no word had come from Dick to the anxious heart so fondly waiting for news in Palace Mansions. Or stay, that is not quite correct, for a long letter from Dick had come by each mail, but they had never reached Dorothy, each one of them having fallen in Lord Aylmer's possession.

"I can't make out why your husband has never written, why he never answered the telegram, I think I shall go into the post office and find out if it really went."

"Amelia said it went," Dorothy replied. She, poor child, had never admitted as much to her cousin, but she was prepared for the worst that could possibly happen. Dick's long silence was beginning to tell upon her, and she was not recovering as quickly as might be desired; indeed, her doctor and her cousin, too, were for the most part thoroughly uneasy about her.

And yet she had now been nearly six weeks without a line from Dick—Dick who had left her with such fond words of love on his lips—say, and in his eyes; Dick, who knew that now, of all times, letters would be of greater value than ever they had been, when she was left alone in her hour of trial. Yet he had not written; there was no answer to the telegram announcing the boy's birth; there had come no word nor sign out of the dark blankness of hope and fear, doubt and despair which was gradually creeping over her.

And after all, she told herself, and it was not to be wondered at if Dick had got a little tired of her—a stupid thing like her, as ignorant as a child. What was there in her to keep such a man as Dick faithful and true when the width of half the world was stretched between them? And then her eyes fell upon the bangle, which she always wore upon her left

wrist, with its bright beacon of hope and trust, Dick's last message to her—"Dinna Forget." No, nothing should make her doubt him, he was overworked, ill, something had happened to keep him from writing.

"Don't worry about it, dear Esther," she said bravely. "Dick would not leave me without a letter without some good reason for it. Please don't doubt him; you don't know how good and kind and thoughtful he is—you don't indeed Esther."

No, I don't, said Esther, drily; then, with an outburst of tenderness very rare in one of her serene and composed nature, she cried, "Oh, don't look at me in that reproachful way, darling. I want to believe this Dick of yours perfect—I do dear. But when we go on day after day, week after week, and I see your anxious eyes, see your face getting whiter and whiter—why, I can't help feeling angry at times, and suspicious, and—and as if I should like to kill somebody," she ended passionately.

Dorothy did not speak for a long time, but sat tracing the words on her bangle with a very thin and fragile-looking finger.

"I know what you must think," she said at last. "And I know what Dick's silence must seem to you; but I promised to trust him, whatever happens, and I always will. He gave me this the very last of all, she cried, holding out her wrist—oh, so much toward her cousin; "and he gave it as a token between us; 'Dinna Forget.' I know it will be all right by-and-by. Esther, I know it will; but wait a little longer, before you condemn him—just a little longer."

The piteous appeal went straight to Esther's heart. "Well, I won't mention him again, Dorothy, dear, not for another month. We will talk about other things. Are you going out for a drive to-day? The carriage will be here at 3 o'clock."

"Just as you please, dear," Dorothy answered, listlessly.

"I think you ought to go. It is good for you, and good for the boy, too, and of course you won't have a carriage—at least, not such a carriage—always."

"No," said Dorothy.

Esther was busy making a wonderful bonnet for the wonderful boy, and she pinned in several folds of lace and tried several effects before she spoke again.

"Isn't it odd," she remarked at last, "that Lord Aylmer has left his carriage and horses and servants in town all this time, when he is away?"

"Perhaps he never takes them out of town," suggested Dorothy.

"Perhaps not. Anyway, it is very pleasant for us as it is," Esther replied. "Well, I shall go and get ready," and, gathering up her bonnet and materials, she went out of the room, leaving Dorothy alone.

Almost immediately Amelia Harris came in, bringing a bag filled with little vases of fresh flowers. "Oh!" said Dorothy; "those are the flowers from Aylmer's Field. They are lovely. Is it a pretty place, Amelia? I suppose you have often been there."

"Yes, madam; I have been there once or twice," Amelia replied.

"It is a fine place, is it not?" Dorothy asked.

"A very grand place, madam," said Amelia, apparently giving all her attention to the flower vases.

"And Lady Aylmer—what is she like? Is she nice—handsome?"

"My lady is very handsome, madam," said Amelia, putting the last vase in its place, and coming to put a fold of the window curtain straight. "Very haughty and hard-like, but very handsome for all that."

"Ah!"

Dorothy sat in silence for a minute or two. Amelia Harris began to tidy the little table between the window and the fireplace.

"It seems such a pity that"—Dorothy began, intending to say, "such a pity that Lord and Lady Aylmer did not get on well together." Then she broke off short, suddenly remembering that it would not do to speak of Lord Aylmer's private affairs to his valet's wife, and also that she was not supposed to know more of them than Lord Aylmer himself would be likely to tell so new an acquaintance as she was.

Amelia was looking at her with an expectant expression, and Dorothy made haste to finish her sentence.

"It seems such a pity that Lord Aylmer has no heir," she said confusedly.

Amelia Harris not unnaturally, perhaps, misunderstood her.

"Lord Aylmer has an heir, madam," she said quickly, thinking that Mrs. Harris was giving a keen eye to the future. "His nephew, Mr. Richard Aylmer, is the heir—he is in India."

"Ah! yes, really, said Dorothy. She felt very sick and faint as she leaned among the cushions. Amelia Harris thought she was disappointed, whereas, in truth, Dorothy was only nervous and upset at the sudden mention of her husband's name.

"Mr. Aylmer," Amelia continued, "is in the army—in the Fortieth Dragoons. A handsome young gentleman, but wild—very wild."

Dorothy got up. "Yes, I dare say, but I ought not to talk about him," she said, her voice trembling and her eyes misty with tears. "I must go and dress for our drive."

She was sobbing passionately by the time she got into her own room. "Dick, Dick," she cried passionately, "it is hard to have to deny you like this, for it was denying you, though I said nothing. Why are you leaving me to fight my way through all these difficulties alone? I won't believe that you are false to me—not until you tell me so; but if it is so, you ought to tell me, you ought to tell me!"

She was sobbing passionately, and the scalding tears ran down her pale face and over her little cold hands. They recalled her to herself. "No, I will be brave, I won't doubt you my darling. There is something I do not understand, I will wait a little longer."

She unlocked a drawer in her wardrobe and took out the large picture of Dick which she had hidden out of Lord Aylmer's way. "My love, my dear love, I will trust you and believe you," she murmured fondly. "I will not give way again—I will be brave."

YOUNG FOLKS.

Mother's Girl.

Sleeves to the dimpled elbow,
Fun in the sweet blue eyes,
To and fro upon errands,
The little maiden hies.

Now she is washing dishes,
Now she is feeding the chicks,
Now she is playing with pussy,
Or teaching Rover tricks.

Wrapped in a big white apron,
Pinned in a checkered shawl,
Hanging clothes in the garden,
Oh, were she only tall!

Hushing the fretful baby,
Coaxing his hair to curl,
Stepping around so briskly,
Because she is mother's girl.

Hunting for eggs in the haymow,
Petting old Brindle's calf,
Riding Don to the pasture,
With many a ringing laugh.

Coming whenever you call her,
Running wherever sent,
Mother's girl is a blessing,
And mother is well content.

A Wise Cheetah.

When Jack Norton was twelve years old he ran away to sea and there suffered shipwreck—times enough to be willing to be a land-lubber.

When he was forty years old he was bound for Africa, when one day the wind decided to rule, and for hours nothing could gainsay the power that swamped the boat and left the men struggling for life.

This proved to be Jack's last voyage, for he found the country so much to his liking that he decided to stay.

He had been hunting with some of the natives when he chanced to kill a cheetah which had two beautiful kittens.

One of these he raised for a pet and the graceful cat-dog loved its master most devotedly.

One day Jack was very ill and Don, the cheetah, seemed to know it, for he was constantly near him and would often lick his master's face and then, putting his head on the edge of the bed, would watch Jack tenderly.

Feeling that he was growing worse and wishing some one would come, he said: "Oh dear! Don, go fetch Dr. Hilton, good Don!"

Then with his dog intelligence he seemed to understand.

Dr. Hilton sat reading that evening, when suddenly he heard a scratching and whining at the door.

On opening it there stood Don. Very much surprised to see him so late, the doctor thought he would keep him till morning but no, the faithful creature began to miaow and scratch at the door, then run back to the doctor, pulling his coat and acting so strangely that Dr. Hilton thought something must be wrong.

Putting on his hat to see what was amiss he followed Don to the door, who at once bounded with joy, running ahead, then back again, doing all he could to hurry his companion. Soon they reached the place where Jack lay moaning. "Well! I declare," said the doctor, as he administered to the sick man, "that cheetah of yours is worth his weight in gold."

This Bird is a Kicker.

I would like to know the name of the man who originated the falsehood that the ostrich, when pursued by his enemies, sticks his head in the sand.

This man never saw an ostrich, or when he did, he and not the bird stuck his head into the sand, for, weight for age, an ostrich could give that particular brand of man about ten stone and a beating.

An ostrich that has not been brought up on the bottle, or dosed with paregoric, will stand eight feet high when he has done growing and weigh three hundred pounds. He can kick harder than a mule, travel faster than a horse, and grow fat on food at which a goat would elevate his nose.

It is more difficult to make his acquaintance now than it used to be a few hundred years ago, for he has been taught by experience to look upon man as an enemy.

He takes no pride in his feathers, but he does not want to lose them, being accustomed to them and knowing that they are useful in keeping off the dew, or at least, counteracting its effect.

He is a dangerous bird when driven into a corner, as he uses his feet with great dexterity, and if he plants them on a man, anywhere between his collar button and the waistband, the man's relatives always claim the insurance money if there's any on him.

Likely to Remember.

Proud Mother—You haven't kissed the baby.

Bachelor Uncle—Um—er—I'll try to remember next time. I'll kiss her when I—er—come back from Europe.

When will that be?

Let-me—see. About sixteen years.

Legal Advice.

Tenant—The plaster in the house I occupy is falling down, and I'm afraid if I have it fixed, and take it out of the rent, the landlord will kick. What would you advise me to do?

Lawyer—Move. Five dollars, please.

Steps are being taken to provide Owen Sound with a dry-dock capable of accommodating the largest vessels that run on the great Lakes. It will be 430 feet in length, with 16 feet of water on the sill.

A Philanthropist.

Catterson—I tell you, old man, you are making an awful mistake. You ought to live in the country.

Hattersom—I would, old fellow, but I hate to disappoint my friends who are already living there.

Catterson—Disappoint them! How!

Hattersom—Well, you see, they like to visit me in the city so much.

Cunning leads to knavery. It is but a step from one to the other, and that very slippery.—Bruyere.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Intelligent Hen.

The hen may be negligent of her duties during the winter weather, but she generally manages to come up to the scratch in the time of spring gardening.

Served Him Right.

Aunt Mandy—De doctah done say Zeph's got chickenpox.

Uncle Lige—I done tole dat niggah larst week he'd ketch somefin' if he didn't keep away fum dem hen houses.