

HELEN LAFONE: OR THE FOES OF A HOUSEHOLD. A TALE OF ENGLISH LIFE.

CHAPTER XXX.

REMONO. "Not at all, I have plenty of time. To himself he thought, 'At an hour's time, Helen, you will reproach yourself bitterly for your delay.' Then he went on— "On that same day there was a slight accident on this line, just outside the station. The train ran off the line. No one was much hurt except one young lady, who had sustained serious injuries to her head owing to a fall. She was unconscious, and as there was nothing about her which gave any clue to who she was or where she came from, my wife had her brought to this house. I was away from home that day. She was ill for a long time, it was a very dangerous case of concussion of the brain; but she had a marvellous constitution, and recovered that her memory did not return. He glanced at his companion, who had listened at first with a polite show of interest which had partly concealed his natural indifference. Now, however, he looked really interested, and he raised his head when the clergyman paused, as though wishing for him to go on. "It was very unfortunate," went on the doctor, "for we were still prevented from gaining any information about her. She made no attempt to tell us even her name. She appeared not to have the slightest recollection of how she came to be here. She showed no curiosity about anything. She lived literally from day to day, fully alive to everything that happened at the moment, but as each day passed it became a blank to her—it was lost she remembered nothing more about it. "Was there no name on her luggage, had you no clue?" asked Percival, whose interest was now thoroughly roused. "There was no name on the luggage, no name on the linen, or in the case of two books; only initials. "What initials?" "I will tell you presently; just now there are things of more importance. This went on for some months; my wife and I hoped constantly, the doctor gave us every reason to expect that she would completely recover. "And you kept her all that time?" "Yes, I kept her as if she were a child. She was gentle and kind, and long before that we had grown so fond of her that it would have been a great trouble to us to part with her. "He was silent again, apparently lost in thought, and Percival looked at him with a new interest. He had never before come across a man who had harbored an utterly unknown young woman in his house for months, and been content to grow fond of her without knowing even her name. "Is she here now?" he asked. "She is in the drawing room with my wife. "Have you never to this day found out who she is?" "Yes; in time she recovered her memory, and expressed a wish to hear how she came to be in this house with people whom she had never seen before the accident but to whom she attached, believe, became sincerely attached," said Mr Longworthy with a quiet smile. "She would have shown a wonderful degree of ingratitude if she had not become attached to them, I should say," returned the younger man. "You will excuse my saying that she might have met with an accident at almost any other railway station in the world without receiving such extraordinary kindness and hospitality. "I am the clergyman of this place," replied Mr Longworthy, and long before that he appeared to think he had said all that was necessary. "The day came, however," he went on, "when she asked my wife to tell her about herself, and my wife, having had her instructions from the doctor, told her everything without reserve. She was very much shocked and upset, but what surprised me more than anything else, when my wife told me about it, was that some allusion having been made to that other accident, she insisted upon hearing all about it. Strange to say, that story seemed to affect her almost more than her own. "Did she give no reason for that?" asked Percival, who was now listening with the greatest attention, and did not lose a word of the story. "She said," went on the clergyman, "that having just heard of her own railway accident, as one may say, and not being very strong, yet, she could not help imagining herself to have been in that other train, and picturing to herself what her horrible fate would have been. "Was that not rather strange?" "I thought so; my wife, on the contrary, considered it quite natural, looking at the circumstances under which our friend had come into our house. It was soon explained. On the following day she told us not only her name, but her whole story. It appeared that when she left home she was in that train, intending to go to London, but she changed her mind, and at Dewhurst got into the train that brought her here. "He paused, involuntarily arrested by the look on Percival's face. It was as pale as death, and there was a look almost of entreaty in his eyes. He rose from his chair as he asked— "Why did you not communicate with her friends then?" "Because in the meantime complications had arisen. Her husband, believing her to be dead, had married again; and she was married in a newspaper. "Her name," said Percival, "what was her name? You do not know what suspicions you are exciting." "The initials on her luggage were 'H. M.', and her name she told us was Helen Moore. "He too rose as he spoke, feeling al-

In time they were calmer. They sat down and began to talk, and Percival said— "Do you know what I have done, Helen? Can you ever forgive me?" "It is not for me to forgive you," she answered. "But I know, Percival; yes, I know. But for that I should have done it months ago." "But you never doubted me, Helen? You knew all along that I did not care for anyone but you?" "Yes, I knew, at least I supposed so, but it came so suddenly; it was such a shock, and I was not well. It was all such a puzzle, I did not know what to think. It was not enough to know; and then I thought I was going out of my mind, so that it was better to keep hidden. I cannot explain it to you. To understand what I felt you must have felt as I did, and I hope—I hope—you never may." "My poor darling," kissing her again, "what you must have suffered and gone through. It makes my heart ache to think of it. But tell me why did you leave home as all this?" "Do you not know? Can you not guess? What made you marry Alice?" "Because—because you don't mean," he went on after a sudden pause, "that it had begun then?" "It had begun before we were married. It began long ago, when I was nursing Dr. Hazlitt." "Good heaven! and I never saw, never even dreamed of such things. How blind I was; but how could I imagine such a thing unless I had been the vilest puppy in creation. Why did you not tell me? I had given me one hint all this might have been prevented." "How could I, Percival?" she cried in a voice of misery. "You forget how things were. How could I have betrayed her? Was I never to guess that things would come to such a pass as this? Could I tell that, even if her way was clear, she would—Oh, Percival, do not blame me. I have blamed myself very bitterly, and I had no one to ask advice, no one to help me. I could only do as I thought best, and I have suffered more than I can tell." Her voice broke in a sob. Percival looked very white and angry as he answered— "Blame you? I do not blame you; blame nobody, but she was—denying his hand while his voice choked with anger. "Whose fault is it all, but hers?" he went on. "She sent you almost to your death; she fooled me and made me believe she loved me. I can never forgive her, never. To-morrow she shall know everything." "Ah, no," said Helen; "you will not be hard on her; think what her position must be, even if you say no word of blame. Percival, do not think of her; think of the Longworths and their goodness, their more than goodness. What should I have been without them? In that awful illness, who would have nursed and taken care of me? But for them I must have died." She won his promise from him, and then they sat talking until Fanny knocked discreetly at the door to tell them tea was ready. When Percival and Helen came into the dining-room Helen looked as if she had undergone a transformation; never had they seen such a deep, soft color in her cheeks, nor such a happy brilliancy in her eyes. She came in her hand slipped into Percival's arm, and as her eyes met those of Mr Longworthy, she said— "There is no need to make you two known, you contrived that without my intervention." Then she went on, turning to her hostess— "Here is my husband, Mrs. Longworthy. I have had some difficulty in preventing him from rushing to your feet long ago, but I thought you would prefer a less irregular way of meeting." Percival and Mrs. Longworthy shook hands, and she said— "Will he be at home tonight, do you know?" she asked looking rather beseechingly at the doctor. "I fancy not tonight. I met him riding this afternoon, and he said something about having to go to the next village." "Riding?" said Percival. "I wonder if I met him this afternoon. Just after I had left the station I met a man on horseback, and he directed me to your house. What does your doctor look like?" "Yes," said Percival, "that was the man. I noticed him, because after answering my questions in the shortest possible way he asked my name. On hearing it he looked, I thought, even surer than before." Helen said nothing. Mr Longworthy observed, "He is very taciturn fellow." And Mrs. Longworthy said— "I hope you are not obliged to leave us tonight, Mr. Moore." "Not if you will be kind enough to keep me. But—in that case, I should like a telegram," he finished slowly, the expression of his face changing a little, while his own careless words, spoken to Alice only a few hours before, shot through his mind. "If I find I cannot get back tonight I will wire." "I am sorry to hear that," said Mrs. Longworthy. "I am sure you will be glad to get home." "After tea Percival was provided with writing materials, and he wrote a few words which he showed to Helen, saying— "Will you do it?" They were as follows: "I am kept here all night by business. Shall be home tomorrow night, when I will explain." "You cannot say anything in a telegram," she said, "and anything must be explained personally." "Her manner has been so strange lately, I should be prepared for almost anything."

CHAPTER XXXI. LIGHT. Meanwhile Alice and Sir Cuthbert were amusing themselves in a way of which Percival little dreamed. Could he have followed them and overheard their conversation, he would probably be struck dumb with amazement. Sir Cuthbert, who always spent the greater part of every morning in writing letters, had finished that occupation when Percival set off on his journey to Miller's Gate. After having shaken hands with his host, however, he again retired to the library, and did not leave it until the gong sounded for lunch. At lunch he, of course, saw Alice, who had spent her morning in solitary and uninterrupted reflection; perhaps it was this particular occupation which had brought such a cloud over her face and made her look so bitter and unhappy. Naturally she did her utmost to overcome this feeling in the presence of Sir Cuthbert and the servants. She only partially succeeded. Sir Cuthbert's instinct was too keen to be deceived so easily. "During the morning the mist and damp had cleared away, about noon the sun came out, and the afternoon promised to be exceedingly fine. "When lunch was over, Alice returned to her writing room, and, taking up a book, began listlessly to turn over the pages. Presently Sir Cuthbert joined her, and, after standing a few minutes at the window, he turned round and said— "It is a beautiful afternoon, Mrs. Moore. Will you come for a walk?" She laid down her book, and after a moment's consideration said— "I think I should like a walk. Yes, I will come." She left the room, and presently joined him again clad in furs, and with a curious foreign cap, which became her well, upon her flaxen hair. They went out of the house and through the garden in silence. "Which way shall we go?" he asked, as, having gone through the lodge gate, he paused for a moment on the high road. "If the hill will not be too much for you, I should like to go to the fell. It is a favorite walk of mine," she added in explanation. "I will follow where you lead," said Sir Cuthbert, and turning to the right they took the road leading to the Fell. It was scarcely more than a lane—steep, narrow, and very rough, bordered on each side by a high wall grey stone, covered with moss and common ferns. They went slowly, as much for Sir Cuthbert's sake as for Alice's. They walked for some distance without exchanging many words, then Sir Cuthbert said— "This is very beautiful country; it goes straight to one's heart." "All strangers fall in love with Os-motherly. I was born and have grown up here. I suppose that is why I do not feel its charm. Indeed, I doubt if under any circumstances I should do so. I am not a lover of Nature." "That implies that when people do not love it is because their natures are not wholly developed. Do you really believe that?" "I think so." She said nothing, and for some time neither spoke. Sir Cuthbert again broke the silence. "You are not happy, Mrs. Moore." "I wondered if you would find that out." "I know it by a hundred signs and tokens. There is no doubt inevitable to the world at large, which even your husband does not see, but which are very clear to my eyes. "You came out on purpose to talk about this, I think," she said. "Yes; have you any objection?" "None at all. Why should we not for once try to make things clear?" "If we go so far as that I shall probably say things and ask questions which will give you pain. Can you bear that?" "I think I am proof against any pain you can give me; in that way, I mean. Say what you please." "When I asked you to marry me before I went to India, you refused me because you loved another man. Is that man your husband?" "Yes." "He does not love you." "He scarcely takes pains to hide it, does he?" "I think you are unjust. Few people would have found it out. You are conceited, but I do not suppose one of these people who have been staying in your house discovered it." "I daresay it is so." "How came you to be married?" he said, more to himself than to her. "I am tempted to tell you the whole story," she said after a pause. "If you would find it rather interesting as a study of character I know." "Whatever you tell me about yourself I will necessarily interest me." "You will see my character in a new light I am sure, you will probably say when I am finished that you did not think any one capable of such madness existed." "Let me quote one of my favorite authors, and reply, 'That's as well it may be.'" "It has turned out so oddly," she went on, with a half smile, and though she had not heard him. "I never thought it would turn out like this. It would really be interesting if we could see into the future, only I suppose, if we could, we should not believe it. We should believe rather in the power of our own efforts to change it." "Very probably, and a good deal of the excitement and interest would be taken from life." "There I do not agree with you. I think it would be in the highest degree interesting to work up to a given point, seeing each step of the way before us. Sometimes when I wanted a change in my novels I have read them in that way. I found out the end, and then began at the beginning and observed how the author worked up to it. If the book was well written, it was quite as inter-

HURON COUNTY Opening of the June Session of the Board of Supervisors' Meeting. The council met pursuant to the adjournment of the session of the council held on the 10th inst. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. Letter from R. N. W. was read and referred to the committee. Statement of cash in hand and referred to finance committee. Report of county assessor and referred to finance committee. Demand of the license of East Huron for the enforcement of the Salt Act was read and referred to committee. The report of the fire ward was read and adopted. Moved by Dr. Rollins Mr. Ewen, that the council be granted for the high school at Exeter nary statutory provision the school committee. Moved by Mr. Sand Mr. Strong, that the license fee to \$10 per annum hereafter, to take effect the 1st of January, 1884. Moved by Mr. Sand and dumb person, request to hospital was read and approved. Moved by Mr. Kelly, Jacques, that the Decatur county council be granted for the afternoon session. Moved by Mr. Miller Mr. Oliver, that this council meet again at Carried. Council resumed the chair. Report of the road committee was read and approved. Letter from Mr. Smith regarding certain requests registry office was read and approved. Moved by Mr. John T. by Mr. Ercutt that a bill this council to confirm the township of Stanley, 12, 1887, to close up a portion of road allowance and 31 on the 5th township of Stanley. Moved by Mr. Beck, McEwen, that this council meet again tomorrow. The county council adjourned, the ward minutes of the ward were read and approved. Moved by Mr. Beck, F. W. Johnston, that Garrett J. Driskell be appointed assessor of the township of Stanley for this purpose. Carried. Moved by Dr. Rollins Mr. Kelley, that the care of the deaf and dumb invalid, expanded by Mr. Allen advantage for the benefit Carried on a division 21. Moved in amendment seconded by Mr. McKewton's division. Motion of Messrs K was again submitted to the council. Upon the motion voted for the motion. Moved by Mr. Sproat, McIntosh, Gieson, F. W. Johnston, Cracked, Bisset, Rolli Carried by majority of Report of the school read and ordered to the next meeting. Moved by Mr. Hay Morton, that the competition the Lieut.-Gov on behalf of this county the School Act, having the choosing of limiting the bounds rate of public Carried. Moved by Mr. Jas J. by Mr. Kelly, that adjourn to 4 o'clock the chair. The council resumed the chair. Communication for reference to a proposition the 6th con, town of Elms, was referred committee. Report of the ap read and adopted. Moved by Mr. Ma Mr. Milne, that in provision having the council foreclose rent the police magistrates salaries in which by salary, and further, existing as to the risk control the fees imposed, Dr. Williams the police magistrates imposed. Referred to the report of the committee, and to the report be second adjourn to meet p.m. Carried. The council resumed the chair. Moved by Mr. Milne, that the points for the ward and valuing the

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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