

HER BOY AT LAST.

A SOCIETY NOVEL.

By the author of "Edith Lyle," "Mildred Forrest House," "Chateau d'Or," etc.

"Maddy would like this—it's her nature," he whispered, advancing a step or two, and setting down his feet as softly as if stepping on eggs.

Happening to lift his eyes before one of the long mirrors, he spied himself, wondering much what that "queer looking chap" was doing there in the midst of such elegance, and why Mrs. Noah did not turn him out!

There was a familiar look about the cape of the camelot cloak worn by the man in the glass, and Grandpa Markham's face turned crimson as the truth burst upon him.

"How 'shamed of me Maddy would be," he thought, glancing sideways at Mrs. Noah, who had witnessed the blunder, and was now looking from the window to hide her laughter.

Grandpa believed she did not see him and comforted with that assurance he began to remark upon the mirror, saying, "it made it appear as if there was two of you," a remark which Mrs. Noah fully appreciated.

"This will last Maddy a week. I thank you, ma'am. You have added some considerable to the happiness of a young girl, who wouldn't disgrace even such a room as this," he said, as he passed into the hall.

Mrs. Noah received his thanks graciously and led him to the yard, where Sorrel stood waiting for him.

"Oid, but clever as the day is long," was Mrs. Noah's comment, as, after seeing him safe out of the yard, she went back to her vegetable oysters, which were in danger of being overdone.

Driving at a brisk trot through the grounds, Sorrel was soon out upon the highway; and with spirits exhilarated by thoughts of going home, he kept up the trot until turning a sudden corner his master saw the carriage from Aikenside approaching at a rapid rate.

Paul, saw him too, but soorning to give half the road to such as Sorrel and the square-boxed wagon, he kept steadily on, while Grandpa Markham, determining to speak to Guy, reined his horse a little nearer, raised his hand in token that the negro should stop.

As a natural consequence the wheels of the two vehicles became interlocked, and, as the powerful greys were more than a match for Sorrel, the front wheel of Grandpa Markham's wagon was wrenched off, and the old man precipitated to the ground, which, fortunately for him, was in that locality covered with sand banks, so that he was only stunned for an instant, and failed to hear the insolent negro's remark: "Served you right, old cove; might have turned out for a gentleman; neither did he see the sudden flashing of Guy Remington's eye, as, leaping from his carriage, he seized the astonished African by the collar, and demanded "What he meant by serving an old man so shameful a trick, and then insulting him?"

All apology and regret, the cringing driver tried to make some excuse, but Guy stopped him short, telling him to see how much the wagon was damaged, while he ran to the old man, who had recovered from the first shock, and was trying to extricate himself from the folds of the camelot cloak. Near by was a blacksmith's shop, and thither Guy ordered his driver to take the broken-down wagon with a view to getting it repaired.

"Tell him I want it done at once," he said authoritatively, as if he knew his name carried weight with it; then turning to grandpa, he asked again if he were hurt.

"No, not specially—jolted my old bones some. You are very kind, sir," grandpa replied, brushing the dust from his pantaloons and then involuntarily grasping Guy's arm for support, as his weak knees began to tremble from the effects of excitement and fright.

"That darky shall rue this job," Guy said, savagely, as he gazed pityingly upon the shaky old creature beside him. "I'll discharge him to-morrow."

"No, young man. Don't be rash. He'll never do it again; and sprigs like him think they've a right to make fun of old codgers like me," was grandpa's meek expostulation.

"Do, pray, Guy, how long must we wait here?" Agnes asked, impatiently, leaning out of the carriage and partially drawing her veil over her face as she glanced at Grandpa Markham, but a look from Guy silenced her; and turning again to grandpa, he asked:

"What did you say? You have been to Aikenside to see me?"

"Yes, and I was sorry to miss you. I—I it makes me feel awkward to tell you, but I wanted to borrow some money, and I didn't know nobody as likely to have it as you. That woman up to your house said she knew you wouldn't let me have it, 'cause you hadn't it to spare. Mebby you haven't," and grandpa waited anxiously for Guy's reply.

Now Mrs. Noah had a singular influence over her young master, who was in the habit of consulting her with regard to his affairs, and nothing could have been more unpropitious to the success of grandpa's suit than knowing she disapproved.

Besides this, Guy had only the previous week lost a small amount loaned under similar circumstances. Standing silent for a moment, while he buried and reburied his shining boots in the hills of sand, he said at last, "Candidly, sir, I don't believe I can accommodate you. I am about to make repairs at Aikenside, and have partially promised to loan money on good security to a Mr. Silas Slocum, who, 'if things work right,' as he expresses it, intends building a mill on some property which has come, or is coming, into his hands."

"That's mine—that's mine, my homestead," gasped grandpa, turning white

almost as his hair blowing in the April wind. "There's a stream of water on it, and he says if he forecloses and gets it he shall build a mill, and tear our old house down."

Guy was in a dilemma. He had not asked how much Mr. Markham wanted, and as the latter had not told him, he naturally concluded it a much larger sum than it really was, and did not care just then to lend it.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said, after a little. "I'll drop Slocum a note to-night saying I've changed my mind, and shall not let him have the money. Perhaps, then, he won't be so anxious to foreclose, and will give you time to look among your friends."

Guy laid a little emphasis on that last word, and looking up quickly grandpa was about to say, "I am not so much a stranger as you think. I know your father well," but he checked himself with the thought, "No, that will be too much like begging pay for a deed of mercy done years ago."

So Guy never suspected that the old man before him had once laid his father under a debt of gratitude. The more he reflected the less inclined he was to lend the money, and as grandpa was too timid to urge his needs, the result was that when at last the wheel was replaced and Sorrel again trotted on toward Devonshire he drew after him a sad heavy heart, and not once until the village was reached did he hear the cherry chuckle with which his kind master was wont to encourage him.

"Poor Maddy! I dread tellin' her the most, she was so sure," grandpa whispered, as he stopped before the office, when Maddy waited for him.

But Maddy's disappointment was keener than his own, and so, after the sorrowful words, "And I failed, too," he tried to comfort the poor child, who, leaning her throbbing head against his shoulder, sobbed bitterly, as in the soft spring twilight they drove back to the low red cottage where grandpa waited for them.

CHAPTER V.

THE RESULT.

It was Farmer Green's new buggy and Farmer Green's bay colt which, three days later, stopped before Dr. Holbrook's office, and not the square-boxed wagon, with old Sorrel attached, for the former was standing quietly in the chip-yard, behind the low red house, while the latter, with his nose over the barn-yard fence, was neighing occasionally, as if he missed the little hands which had daily fed him the oatmeal he liked so much, and which now lay hot and parched and helpless upon the white counterpane which Grandpa Markham had spun and woven herself.

Maddy might have been just as sick as she was if the examination had never occurred; but it was natural for those who loved her to impute it all to the effects of excitement and cruel disappointment, so there was something like indignation mingling with the sorrow gnawing at the hearts of the old couple as they watched by their fever-stricken darling. Farmer Green, too, shared the feeling, and numerous at first were his animadversions against that sprig of a Holbrook, who was not fit to doctor a cat, much less examine a school-marm.

But when Maddy grew so sick as not to know him or his wife, he laid aside his prejudices, and suggested to Grandpa Markham that Dr. Holbrook be sent for.

"He's great on fevers," he said, "and is good on curin' sick folks, I s'pose; so, though he would have preferred some one else should have been called, confidence in the young doctor's skill won the day, and grandpa consented, and Farmer Green was sent for the physician, to whom he said, with his usual bluntness:

"Well, you nigh about killed our little Maddy t'other day, when you refused the stiffcut, and now we want you to cure her."

The doctor looked up in surprise, but Farmer Green soon explained his meaning, making out a most aggravated case, and representing Maddy as wild with delirium.

"Keeps talkin' about the big books, the Latin and the Hebrew, and even Catechism, as if such like was 'lowed in our schools. I s'pose you didn't know no better; but if Maddy dies, you'll have it to answer for, I reckon."

The doctor did not try to excuse himself, but hastily took down the medicines he thought he might need, and stowed them carefully away.

He had expected to hear from that examination, but not in this way, and rather nervously he made some inquiries, as to how long she had been ill, and so forth.

Maddy's case lost nothing by Mr. Green's account, and by the time the doctor's horse was ready, and he on his way to the cottage, he had arrived at the conclusion that of all the villainous men outside the walls of the State Prison, he was the most villainous, and Guy Remington next.

What a cozy little chamber it was where Maddy lay—just such a room as a girl like her might be supposed to occupy, and the young doctor felt like treading upon forbidden ground as he entered the room which told so plainly of girlish habits, from the fairy slippers hung on a peg, to the fanciful little work-box made of cones and acorns.

Maddy was asleep, and sitting down beside her the doctor asked that the shawl which had been pinned before the window to exclude the light might be removed, so that he could see her, and thus judge better of her condition. They took the shawl away, and the sunlight came streaming in, disclosing to the doctor's view the face never before seen distinctly, or thought much about, if seen. It was ghastly pale now, save where the hot blood seemed bursting through the cheeks, while the beautiful brown hair was brushed back from the brow where the veins were swollen and full. The lips were slightly apart, and the hot breath came in quick, panting gasps, while occasionally a faint moan escaped them, and once the doctor heard, or thought he heard, the sound of his own name. One little hand lay upon the bedspread, but the doctor did not touch it. Ordinarily he would have grasped it as readily as if it had been a piece of marble, but the sight of Maddy, lying there so sick, and the fear that he had helped to bring her where she was, awoke to life a curious state of feeling with regard to her, making him almost as nervous as on the day when she appeared before him as Candidate No. 1.

"Feel her pulse, doctor; it is faster most than you can count," Grandpa Markham whispered; and thus entreated, the doctor took the hot, soft hand in his own, its touch sending through his frame a thrill

such as the touch of no other hand had ever sent.

But somehow the act reassured him. All fear of Maddy vanished, leaving behind only an intense desire to help, if possible, the young girl whose fingers seemed to cling round his own as he felt for and found the rapid pulse.

"If she would waken," he said, laying the hand softly down, and placing his other upon her burning forehead.

And, after a time, Maddy did awaken, but in the eyes fixed, for a moment, so intently on him, there was no look of recognition, and the doctor was half glad that it was so. He did not wish her to associate him with her late disastrous failure; he would rather she should think of him as some one come to cure her, for our hero he would, he said to himself, as he gazed into her childish face, and thought how sad it was for such as she to die.

When he first entered the cottage he had been struck with the extreme plainness of the furniture, betokening the poverty of its inmates; but now he forgot everything except the sick girl, who grew more and more restless, and kept talking of him and the Latin verb which meant to love and which was not in the grammar.

"Guy was a fool, and I was a brute," the doctor muttered, as he folded up the bits of paper whose contents he hoped might do much toward saving Maddy's life.

Then, promising to come again, he rode rapidly away, to visit other patients, who that afternoon were in danger of being sadly neglected, so constantly was their physician's mind dwelling upon the little, low chamber where Maddy Clyde was lying.

As night closed in, she awoke to partial consciousness, and heard that Dr. Holbrook had been there prescribing for her. Turning her face to the wall, she seemed to be thinking; then calling her grandmother to her, she asked, "Did he smooth my hair, and say, 'poor child?'"

Her grandmother hardly thought he did, though she was not in the room all the time. "He had stayed a long while, and was greatly interested," she said.

Maddy had a vague remembrance of such an incident, and in her heart forgave the doctor for his rejection, and thought only how handsome he had looked, even while tormenting her with such unheard-of questions, and how kind he was to her now. The sight of her grandfather, who came in to see her, awoke a new train of ideas, and bidding him to sit beside her, she asked if their home must be sold. Maddy was not to be put off with an evasion, and so grandpa told her honestly at last that Slocum would probably foreclose, and the place be sold.

"But never you mind, Maddy," he said, cheerily, when he saw how excited she seemed; "we shall manage somehow. I can rent two or three rooms cheap of Mr. Green, he told me so—and with old Sorrel I can work on the road, and fetch things from the depot, and in the winter I can shovel snow, and clean roofs. We shall not starve—not a bit of it—so don't you worry, it will make you wus, and I'd rather lose the old homestead a thousand times over than lose you."

Maddy did not reply, but the great tears poured down her flushed cheeks, as she thought of her feeble old grandfather working on the road and shovelling snow to earn his bread; and the fever, which had seemed to be abating, returned with double force, and when next morning the doctor came, there was a look of deep anxiety upon his face as he watched the alarming symptoms of his delirious patient, who talked incessantly, not of the examination now, but of the mortgage and the foreclosure, begging him to see that the house was not sold; to tell them she was earning thirty-six dollars by teaching school; that Beauty should be sold to save their dear old home. All this was strange at first to the doctor, but the rather voluble Mrs. Green, who had come to Grandpa Markham's relief, enlightened him, dwelling with a kind of malicious pleasure upon the fact that Maddy's earnings, had she been permitted to get a "stiffcut," were to be appropriated toward paying the debt.

If the doctor had hated himself the previous day when he rode from the red cottage gate, he hated himself doubly now as he went dashing down the road, determined to resign his office of school inspector that very day. And he did.

Summoning around him those who had been most active in electing him, he refused to officiate again, assuring them that if any more candidates came he should either turn them from his door or give them a certificate without asking a question.

"Put anybody you like in my place," he said "anybody but Guy Remington. Don't for thunder's sake, take him."

There was no probability of this, as Guy lived in another town, and could not have officiated had he wished. But the doctor was too much excited to reason clearly about anything, save Madeline Clyde's case; and during the next few weeks his other patients waited many times in vain for his coming, while he sat by Maddy's side, watching every change, whether for the worse or better. Even Agnes Remington was totally neglected; and so one day she sent Guy to Devonshire to say that as Jessie seemed more than usually delicate, she wished the doctor to take her under his charge and visit her at least once a week. The doctor was not at home, but Tom said he expected him every moment. So, seating himself in the armchair, Guy waited until he came.

"Well, Hal," he began, jocosely, but the joking words he would have uttered next died on his lips as he noticed the strange look of excitement and anxiety on the doctor's face. "What is it?" he asked. "Are all your patients dead?"

"Guy," and the doctor came closely to him, whispering huskily, "you and I are murderers in the first degree, and both deserve to be hung. Do you remember that Madeline Clyde whom you insulted with your logic, and the Catechism, and Latin verbs? She'd set her heart on that certificate. She wanted the money, not for new gowns and fooleries, mind, but to help her old grandfather pay his debts. His place is mortgaged. I don't understand it; but he asked some old hunks to lend him the money, and the miserly rascal, whoever he was, refused. I wish I had it. I'd give it to him out and out. But there's nothing to do with the girl—Maddy, they call her. The disappointment killed her, and she's dying—is raving crazy—and keeps talking of that confounded examination. I tell you, Guy, I get terribly mixed up when I hear her talk, and my heart thumps like a trip-hammer. That's the

reason I have not been up to Aikenside. I wouldn't leave Maddy so long as there was hope, but there is none now. I did not tell them this morning. I couldn't make that poor couple feel worse than they were feeling; but when I looked at her, tossing from side to side, and picking at the bed-clothes, I knew it would soon be over—that when I saw her again the poor little arms would be still enough, and the bright eyes about forever. Guy, I couldn't see her die—I don't like to see anybody die, but her, Maddy, of all others—and so I came away. If you stay long enough, you'll hear the bell toll, I reckon. There is none at Honedale Church, which they attend. They are Episcopalians, you see, and so they'll come up here, maybe. I hope I shall be deader than an adder."

Here the doctor stopped, wholly out of breath, while Guy for a moment sat without speaking a word. Jessie, in his hearing, had told her mother what the sick girl in the doctor's office had said about being poor and wanting the money for grandpa; while Mrs. Noah had given him a rather exaggerated account of Mr. Markham's visit; but he had not associated the two together until now, when he saw the matter as it was, and almost as much as the doctor himself regretted the part he had in Maddy's illness and her grandfather's distress.

"Doc," he said, laying his hand on the doctor's arm, "I am the old hunk, the miserly rascal who refused the money. I met the old man going home that day, and he asked me for help. You say the place must be sold. It never shall, never. I'll see to that, and you must save the girl."

"I can't, Guy. I've done all I can, and now, if she lives, it will be wholly owing to the prayers that old saint of a grand father says for her. I never thought much of these things until I heard him pray; not that she should live any way, but that if it were right Maddy might not die. Guy, there's something in such a prayer as that. It's more powerful than all my medicine swallowed at one grand gulp."

Guy didn't know very much experimentally about praying, and so he did not respond, but he thought of Lucy Atherton, whose life was one act of prayer and praise, and he wished she could know of Maddy, and join her petitions with those of the grandfather. Starting suddenly from his chair, he exclaimed, "I'm going down there. I cannot endure to sit here doing nothing to make amends. It will look queer, too, to go alone. Ah, I have it! I'll drive back to Aikenside for Jessie, who has talked so much of the girl that her mother, forgetting that she was once a teacher, is disgusted. Yes, I'll take Jessie with me, but you must order it; you must say it is good for her to ride, and, Hal, give me some medicine for her, just to quiet Agnes, no matter what, provided it is not strychnine."

Contrary to Guy's expectations, Agnes did not refuse to let Jessie go for a ride, and the little girl was soon seated by her brother's side, chatting merrily of the different things they passed upon the road. But when Guy told her where they were going, and why they were going there, the tears came at once into her eyes, and hiding her face in Guy's lap she sobbed bitterly.

"I did like her so much that day," she said, "and she looked so sorry, too. It's terrible to die!"

Then she plied Guy with questions, concerning Maddy's probable future. "Would she go to heaven, sure?" and when Guy answered at random, "Yes," she asked, "How did he know? Had he heard that Maddy was that kind of good which lets people into heaven? Because, brother Guy," and the little preacher nestled closely to the young man, fingering his coat buttons as she talked, "because, brother Guy, folks can be good—that is, not do naughty things—and still God won't love them unless they—I don't exactly know what, I wish I did."

Guy drew her closer to him, but to that childish yearning for knowledge he could not respond, so he said:

"Who taught you all this, little one?—not your mother, surely."

"No, not mamma, but Miriam, the waiting-maid we left in Boston. She told me about it, and taught me to pray different from mamma, who sometimes keeps her eyes open in church when she is on her knees, and looks at the bonnets near us. Do you pray, brother Guy?"

The question startled the young man, who did not know what to answer, and who was glad that his coachman spoke to him just then asking if he should drive through Devonshire village, or go direct to Honedale by a shorter route.

They would go to the village, Guy said, hoping that the doctor might be persuaded to accompany them. They found the doctor at home and willing to go with them. Indeed, so impatient had he become listening for the first stroke of the bell which was to herald the death he deemed so sure, that he was on the point of mounting his horse and galloping off alone, when Guy drove up with Jessie. It was five miles from Devonshire to Hnedale, and, when they reached a hill which lay half way between, they stopped for a few moments to rest the tired horses. Suddenly, as they sat waiting, a sharp, ringing sound fell on their ears, and grasping Guy's knee, the doctor said, "I told you so; Madeline Clyde is dead."

It was the Devonshire bell, and its twice three strokes betokened that it tolled for somebody youthful, somebody young, like Maddy Clyde. Jessie wept silently, but there were no tears in the eyes of the young men, as with beating hearts they sat listening to the slow, solemn sounds which came echoing up the hill. There was a pause; the sexton's task was nearly done, and it only remained for him to strike the age, and tell how many years the departed one had numbered.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten;" Jessie counted aloud, while every stroke fell like a heavy blow upon the hearts of the young men, who a few weeks ago did not know that Maddy Clyde had ever had existence.

How long it seemed before another stroke, and Guy was beginning to hope they had heard the last when again the sound came floating on the air, and Dr. Holbrook's lip quivered as he now counted aloud, "one, two, three, four, five."

That was all; the bell stopped; and vain were all their listenings to catch another sound. Fifteen years only had passed over the form now forever still.

"She was 15," Guy whispered, remem-

bering distinctly to have heard that number from Maddy herself.

"I thought they told me 14, but of course it's 15," the doctor rejoined. "Poor child, I would have given much to have saved her."

Jessie did not speak but once, when she asked Guy "If it was very far to heaven, and if he supposed Maddy had got there by this time?"

"Hush, Jessie; don't ask such questions," Guy said; then turning to his companion, he continued: "We'll go just the same. I will do what I can for the old man;" and so the carriage drove on, down the hill, across the meadowland passed a low-roofed house, whose walls inclosed the stiffened form of the boy for whom the bell had tolled, and who had been the patient of another than Dr. Holbrook.

Maddy was not dead, but the paroxysm of restlessness had passed, and she lay now in a heavy sleep so nearly resembling death that those who watched by her waited expectantly to see the going out of her last breath. Never before had a carriage like that from Aikenside stopped at that humble cottage, but the neighbors thought it came merely to bring the doctor, whom they welcomed with a glad smile, making way for him to pass to Maddy's bedside. Guy preferred waiting outside until such time as Grandpa Markham could speak with him, but Jessie went with the doctor into the sick room, starting even the grandmother, and causing her to wonder who the richly-dressed child could be.

"She is dying, doctor," said one of the women; but the doctor shook his head, and holding in one hand his watch, he counted the faint pulse beats, as with his eye he measured off the minutes.

"There are too many here," he said. "She needs the air you are breathing," and in his authoritative way he cleared the crowded room of the mistaken friends who were unwittingly breathing up Maddy's very life.

The grandparents and Jessie he suffered to remain, and sitting down by Maddy he watched till the long sleep was ended. Silently and earnestly the aged couple prayed for their darling, asking that if possible she might be spared, and God heard their prayers, lifting, at last, the heavy lethargy from Maddy's brain, and waking her to partial consciousness. It was Jessie who first caught the expression of the opening eyes, and darting forward, she exclaimed, "She's waked up, Dr. Holbrook. She will live."

Wonderingly Maddy looked at her, and then, as a confused recollection of where they had met before crossed her mind, she smiled faintly, and said:

"Where am I now? Have I never come home, and is this Dr. Holbrook's office?"

"No, no; it's home, your home, and you are getting well," Jessie cried, bending over the bewildered girl. "Dr. Holbrook has cured you, and Guy is here, and I, and—"

"Hush, you disturb her," the doctor said, gently pushing Jessie away, and himself asking Maddy how she felt.

She did not recognize him. She only had a vague idea that he might be some doctor, but not Dr. Holbrook; not the one who had so puzzled and tortured her on a day which seemed now so far behind. From the white-haired man kneeling by the bedside there was a burst of thanksgiving for the life restored, and then Grandpa Markham tottered from the room, out into the open air, which had never fallen so refreshingly on his tried frame as it fell now, when he first knew that Maddy would live. He did not care for his homestead; that might go, and he still be happy with Maddy left. But he who had marked that aged disciple's every sigh had another good in store for him, ordering it so that both should come together, just as the two disappointments had come hand in hand.

From the soft cushions of his carriage, where he sat reclining, Guy Remington saw the old man as he came out, and alighting at once he accosted him pleasantly, and then walked with him to the garden, where, on a rustic bench, built for Maddy beneath the cherry trees, Grandpa Markham sat down to rest. From speaking of Madeline it was easy to go back to the day Guy had first met grandpa, and refused his application for money.

"I have thought better of it since," he said, "and am sorry I did not accede to your proposal. One object of my coming here to-day was to say that my purse is at your disposal. You can have as much as you wish, paying me whenever you like, and the house shall not be sold."

"My father—did you know him?" Guy asked, in some surprise, and then the story came out, how, years before, when a city hotel was on fire, and one of its guests in imminent danger from the locality of his room, and his own nervous fear, which made him powerless to act, another guest had braved the hissing flame, and sealing the tottering wall, had dragged out one who, until that hour, was to him an utter stranger.

(To be continued.)

The Breeches Movement.

Accepting knee-breeches as the aesthetic clothes, several persons have written in their favor that they will avoid the bagginess to which trousers are subject at the knees from the devotional posture and from the habit of sitting with one leg resting on the other. Not to discourage this movement, but to prevent disappointment in a worthy effort, it should be mentioned that this idea of the exemption of knee-breeches from being kneed is a radical error, for that their being fastened just below the knee, and the tightness which befits this garment, allow no slack for the bending of the knee; therefore would knee-breeches be kneed more than trousers. That shorter form of breeches which does not come to the knee would be requisite to avoid this bagginess. Yet the tightness worn under these would bag. The aesthetic clothes are not free from difficulty, but no one should be discouraged. The cause is worthy of a great effort, and of a great sacrifice if necessary. Let every aspiring aesthetic say with Harry V.: "Once more to the breach, dear friends!" The Scotch Highland costume is absolutely exempt from bagging at the knees. It has also a picturesqueness far surpassing Mr. Oscar Wilde's black breeches, black stocking and stiff dress coat, and more befitting the aesthetic renaissance whose emblems are the sunflower and the lily.