

HER BOY AT LAST.

A SOCIETY NOVEL.

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

Oh, yes! Maddy would never forget that morning or the nice ride they had. She had enjoyed it so much, and she thanked him many times for his kindness, as she stood waiting for him to drive away, feeling no tremor whatever when at parting he took and held her hand, smoothing it gently, and telling her it was growing fat and plump again. He was a very nice doctor, much better than she had imagined, she thought, as she went slowly to the house and entered the neat kitchen, where her grandmother sat shelling peas for dinner, and her grandfather in his armchair was whispering over his weekly paper.

"Did you meet a grand lady in a carriage?" grandma asked, as Maddy sat down beside her.

"Yes, and Dr. Holbrook said it was Mrs. Remington, from Aikenside. Mr. Guy's step-mother, and that she was more than twenty-five years younger than her husband—isn't it dreadful? I thought so; but the doctor didn't seem to," and in a perfectly artless manner Maddy repeated much of the conversation which had passed between the doctor and herself, appealing to her grandma to know if she had not taken the right side of the argument.

"Yes, child, you did," and grandma's hands lingered among the light green peas in her pan, as if she were thinking of an entirely foreign subject. "I know nothing about this Mrs. Remington, only that she stared a good deal at the house as she went by, even looking at us through a glass, and lifting her spotted veil after she got by. She may have been as happy as a queen with her man, but as a general thing these unequal matches don't work, and had better not be thought on. S'posin' you should think you was in love with somebody, and in a few years, when you got older, be sick of him. It might do him a sight of harm. That's what spoils your poor uncle Joseph, who's been in the hospital at Worcester goin' on nine years."

"It was!" and Maddy's face was all aglow with the interest she always evinced whenever mention was made of the one great living sorrow of her grandmother's life—the shattered intellect and isolation from the world of her youngest brother, who, as she said, had for nearly nine years been an inmate of a mad-house.

"Tell me about it," Maddy continued, bringing a pillow, and lying down upon the faded lounge beneath the window.

"There is no great to tell, only he was many years younger than I. He's only forty-one now, and was several years older than the girl he wanted. Joseph was smart and handsome, and a lawyer, and folks said a sight too good for the girl, whose folks were just nothing, but she had a pretty face, and her long curls bewitched him. She couldn't have been older than you when he first saw her, and she was only sixteen when they got engaged. Joseph's life was bound up in her; he worshipped the very air she breathed, and when she mitted him, it almost took his life. He was too old for her, she said, and then right on top of that we heard after a little that she had married some big bug, I never knew who, plenty old enough to be her father. That settled it with Joseph; he went into a kind of melancholy, grew worse and worse, till we put him in the hospital, usin' his little property to pay the bill until it was all gone, and now he's on charity, you know, exceptin' the little we do. That's what 'tis about your uncle Joseph, and I warn all young girls not to think too much of nobody. They are bound to get sick of 'em, and it makes dreadful work."

Grandma had an object in telling this to Maddy, for she was not blind to the nature of the doctor's interest in her child, and though it gratified her pride, she felt that it must not be, both for her sake and Maddy's, so she told the sad story of uncle Joseph as a warning to Maddy, who could scarcely be said to need it. Still it made an impression on her, and all that afternoon she was thinking of the unfortunate man, whom she had seen but once, and that in his prison home, where she had been with her grandfather the only time she had ever ridden in the cars. He had taken her in his arms then, she remembered, and called her his little Sarah. Perhaps that was the name of his treacherous betrothed. And she asked her grandmother if it were not so.

"Yes, Sarah Morris was her name, and her face was handsome as a doll," grandma replied; and, wondering if she was as beautiful as Jessie, or Jessie's mother, Maddy went back to her reveries of the poor maniac in the asylum, whom Sarah Morris had wronged so cruelly.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHADOWINGS OF WHAT WAS TO BE.

It was very pleasant at Aikenside that afternoon, and the cool breeze blowing from the miniature fish-pond in one corner of the grounds came stealing into the handsome parlors, where Agnes Remington, in becoming toilet, reclined languidly upon the sofa, bending her graceful head to suit the height of Jessie, who was twining some flowers among her curls, and occasionally appealing to Guy to know "if it was not pretty."

In his favorite seat in the pleasant bay window, opening into the garden, Guy was sitting, apparently reading a book, though his eyes did not move very rapidly down the page, for his thoughts were on some other subject. When his pretty step-mother first came to Aikenside, three months before, he had been half sorry, for he knew just how his quiet would be disturbed, but as the weeks went by, and he became accustomed to Jessie's childish prattle and frolicsome ways, while even Agnes herself was not a bad picture for his handsome home, he began to feel how he should miss them when they were gone, Jessie particularly, who made so much sunshine wherever she went, and who was very dear to the heart of the half-brother. He knew, too, that Agnes would rather stay there, for her income did not warrant as luxurious a home as he could give her, and by remaining at Aikenside during the warm season she could afford to pass the winter in Boston, where her personal attractions secured her quite as much attention as was good for her. Had she been more agreeable to him he would not

have hesitated to offer her a home as long as she chose to remain, but, as it was, he felt that Lucy Atherstone would be much happier alone with him. Lucy, however, was not coming yet, and until she did, Agnes perhaps might stay. It is a speculation whether it would be better for Jessie, who certainly would be a teacher in the house and 1837, could have these matters that he was known, it was upon As if divining his thoughts, reflecting, he rather abruptly: "Oh, yes, I can't afford it, but I, too, was thinking just now about you staying here, where you really do improve."

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partly as companion and partly as her teacher?" was Guy's next question, which awoke Mrs. Agnes at once from her reverie.

"Guy," she exclaimed, "are you crazy? That child Jessie's governess! No, indeed! I shall have a teacher from Boston—one whose manners and style are unexceptionable."

Guy had a will of his own, and few could provoke it into action as effectually as Agnes, who, in thus opposing him, was working directly against herself. Paying her no attention, except to bow in token that he heard, Guy asked Jessie her opinion.

"Oh, it will be splendid! Can she come to-morrow? I shan't care how long you are gone if I can have Maddy here, and the doctor will come up every day, will you not?" and the soft eyes looked up pleadingly into the doctor's face.

"It is not settled yet that Maddy comes," the doctor replied, adding, as an answer to Guy's question: "If Agnes were willing, I do not think you could do better than secure Miss Clyde's services. Two children will thus be happy, for Maddy, as I have told you, thinks Aikenside must be a little lower than Paradise. I shall be happy to open negotiations if you say so."

"I'll ride down and let you know to-morrow," Guy said. "These domestic matters, where there is a difference of opinion, are better discussed alone," and he turned good-humoredly toward Agnes, who knew it was useless to oppose him then.

But she did oppose him that night, after the doctor had gone, taking at first the high stand that sooner than have a country girl like Maddy Clyde associated daily with her daughter, whether as teacher or companion, she would give up Saratoga and stay at home. Guy could not explain why it was that opposition from Agnes always aroused all his powers of antagonism.

Yet so it was, and now he was fully determined that Maddy Clyde should come to Aikenside as Agnes was that she should not. He knew, too, how to attain his end without further altercation.

"Very well," was his quiet reply, "you can remain at home if you choose, of course. I had intended taking you myself wherever you wished to go; and not only that, but I was about to ask how much was needed for the necessary additions to your wardrobe, but if you prefer remaining here to giving up a most unfounded prejudice against a girl who never harmed you, and whom Jessie already loves, you can do so."

And Agnes walked from the room, leaving Agnes first to cry, then to pout, then to think it all over, and finally to decide that going to Saratoga and Newport under the protection of Guy was better than carrying out a whim, which, after all, was nothing but a whim.

Accordingly, next morning, as Guy was in his library reading his papers, she went to him, and folding her white hands upon his shoulder, said very prettily:

"I was real cross last night, and let my foolish pride get the ascendancy. But I have reconsidered the matter, and am willing for this Miss Clyde to come, provided you still think it best."

Guy's moustache hid the mischievous smile lurking about his mouth, and he received the concession as graciously as if he did not know perfectly the motive which impelled it. As she had commenced being amiable, she seemed determined to continue it, and offered herself to write a note soliciting Maddy's services.

"As I am Jessie's mother, it will be perfectly proper for me to hire and manage her," she said, and as Guy acquiesced in this suggestion, she sat down at the writing-desk, and commenced a very pleasantly-worded note, in which Miss Clyde was informed that she had been recommended as a suitable person with whom to leave Jessie during the summer and part of the autumn, and that she, Jessie's mother, wrote to ask if for the sum of one dollar per week she was willing to come to Aikenside as governess, or waiting-maid."

"Or what?" Guy asked, as she read to him what she had written. "Maddy Clyde will not be waiting-maid in this house, neither will she come for one dollar per week, as you propose. I hire her myself. I have taken a fancy to the girl. Write another note; substitute companion for waiting-maid, and offer her three dollars per week, instead of one."

As long as Guy paid the bill, Agnes could not demur to the price, although, remembering a time when she had taught a district school for one dollar per week and boarded 'round besides, she thought three dollars far too much. But Guy had commanded, and she generally obeyed him, so she wrote another note which he approved, and sealing it up, sent it by a servant to Madeline.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DECISION.

The reception of Agnes' note produced quite a commotion at the red cottage, where various opinions were expressed as to the prime mover of the plan; grandpa thinking that as Mrs. Agnes wrote the note, and was most interested in it, she of course had suggested it; grandpa insisting that it was Jessie's doings, while Maddy, when she said anything, agreed with her grandmother, though away down in her heart was a half belief that Mr. Guy himself had first thought of having her at Aikenside, where she would rather go than any other spot in the wide world; to Aikenside, with its beautiful lawn almost large enough to be called a park, with its shaded paths and winding walks, its flowers and vines, its fountains and statuary, its fish-pond and grove, its airy rooms, its wide hall, its winding stairs, with banisters of rosewood, its cupola at the top, from which so many miles of hill and meadow land could be discerned, its bay-windows and long piazzas, its sweet-faced, dark-haired Jessie, add its manly, noble Guy. Only the image of Agnes, flashing in silk and diamonds, was a flaw in the picture. From thoughts of her Maddy had insensibly shrank, until she met her in the carriage, and then received the note asking her services. These events wrought in her a change, and dread of Mrs. Agnes passed away. She should like her, and she should be so happy at Aikenside, for of course she was going, and she began to wish the doctor would come, so as to tell her how long before she would be strong enough to enter upon her duties as teacher to little Jessie.

At first Grandpa Markham hesitated. It might do Maddy a deal of hurt to go to Aikenside, he said; her humble home would look mean to her after all that finery, while the temptations to vanity and ambi-

tion would be greater there than at home; but Maddy put all his objections aside, and long before the doctor came she had written to Mrs. Agnes that she would go. The doctor could not understand why it was that in Maddy's home he did not think as well of her going to Aikenside as he had done in the evening previous. She looked so bright, so pure, so artless, sitting by her grandfather's knee, that it seemed a pity to transplant her to another soil, while, hidden in his heart, was a fear of what might be the effect of daily intercourse with Guy. Still he said it was the best thing for her to do, and laughingly remarked that it was far better than teaching the district school; and then he asked if she would ride again that day, but to this Mrs. Markham objected. It was too soon, she said, Maddy had hardly recovered from yesterday's fatigue—suggesting that as the doctor was desirous of doing good to his convalescent patients, he should take poor old deaf Mary Barnes, who complained that he stayed so long with the child at "Jran'ther Markham's" as to have but a moment to spare for her.

Instantly the eyes of Mrs. Markham and the doctor met, the latter feeling very uncomfortable, while the former was confirmed in the suspicion raised by what Maddy told her the day before.

It was the doctor who carried Maddy's answer to Agnes, the doctor who made all the succeeding arrangements, deciding that Maddy would not be wholly strong until the very day fixed upon by Agnes for her departure for Saratoga. For this Guy was sorry. It would have been an easy matter for him to have ridden down to the cottage and see the girl in whom he was beginning to feel so much interested that in his last letter to Lucy he had mentioned her as about to become his sister's governess; but he did not care to see her there. It seemed to him that the surroundings of the slanting-roofed house did not belong to her, and he would rather meet her in his more luxurious home. But the doctor's word was law, and so, on the first day of August he followed Agnes and her three huge travelling trunks to the carriage, and was driven from the house to which Maddy was coming that afternoon.

CHAPTER X.

AT AIKENSIDE.

It was a long, tiresome ride for grandpa, from Honeidae to Aikenside, and he accepted thankfully the doctor's offer to take Maddy there himself. With this arrangement Maddy was well pleased, as it would thus afford her the opportunity she had so much desired of talking with the doctor about his bill, and asking him to wait until she had earned enough to pay it.

To the aged couple, parting for the first time with their darling, the day was very sad; but they would not intrude their grief upon the young girl looking so eagerly forward to the new life opening before her; only grandpa's voice faltered a little when in the morning prayer he commended his child to God, asking that she might be kept from temptation, and that the new sights and scenes to which she was going might not beget in her a love of the world's vanities, or a disgust for her old home; but that she might come back to it the same loving, happy child as she was then, and never be ashamed of the parents to whom she was so dear. There was an answering sob from the chair where Maddy knelt, and after the devotions were ended, she would her arm around her grandfather's neck, and parting his silvery locks, said to him earnestly:

"Grandpa, do you think I could ever be ashamed of you and grandma?"

"I hope not, darling; it would break our hearts; but finery and things is mighty apt to set folks up, and after you've walked a spell on them velvet carpets, you'll no doubt think your feet make a big noise on our bare kitchen floor."

"That may be, but I sha'n't be ashamed of you. No, not if I were Mrs. Guy Remington herself." And Maddy emphasized her words with a kiss, as she thought how nice it would be, provided she were a widow, to be Mrs. Guy Remington, and have her grandparents live at Aikenside with her.

"But, pshaw! I'll never be Mrs. Anybody; and if I am, I'll have to have a husband, which would be such a bother;" was her next mental comment, as, leaving her grandfather, she went to help her grandmother with the breakfast dishes, wondering when she would wipe those blue cups again, and how she should probably feel when she did.

Quickly the morning passed, and just as the clock struck two the doctor's buggy appeared over the hill. Up to this moment Maddy had only been happy in anticipation; but when, with her shawl and bonnet on, she stood waiting while the doctor fastened her little trunk, and when she saw a tear on the wrinkled faces of both her grandparents, her fortitude gave way; and mid a storm of sobs she said her good-byes and received her grandfather's blessing.

It was very pleasant that afternoon, for the summer breeze was blowing cool across the fields, where the laborers were busy; and with the elasticity of youth, Maddy's tears stopped flowing, but not until the dear old home had disappeared, and she was some distance on the road to Aikenside.

"I wonder how I shall like Mrs. Remington and Mr. Guy?" was the first remark she made.

"You'll not see them immediately. They left this morning for Saratoga," the doctor replied.

"Left! Mr. Guy gone?" Maddy repeated, in a disappointed tone.

"Are you very sorry?" the doctor asked, and Maddy replied:

"I did want to see him once; you know I never have."

It would be such a surprise to find that Guy was no other than the terrible inspector, that he would not deceive her, the doctor thought; and so he relapsed into a thoughtful mood, from which Maddy roused him by broaching the subject of the unpaid bill, asking if he'd please not trouble grandpa, but wait until she could pay it.

"Perhaps it's wrong asking it when you were so good, but if you will only take me for payment," and Maddy's soft brown eyes were lifted to his face.

"Yes, Maddy, I'll take you for payment," the doctor said, smiling, half seriously, as his eyes rested fondly upon her.

"There's Aikenside," he said at last, and it was not long before they passed through the gate, guarded by the great

bronze lions, and struck into the gravelled road leading to the house.

"It's grander, finer, than I ever dreamed. Oh! if I could some time have just such a home! and, doctor, look! What does make that water go up in the air so? Is it what they call a fountain?"

In her excitement Maddy had risen, and with one hand resting on the doctor's shoulder, was looking round her eagerly. Guy Remington would have laughed, and been gratified, too, could he have heard the enthusiastic praises heaped upon his home by the little school-girl as she drove up to his door. But Guy was away in the dusty cars, and only Jessie stood on the piazza to receive her teacher. There were warm words of welcome, kisses and hugs; and then Jessie led her friend to the chamber she was to occupy.

"Mother wanted you to sleep the other side of the house, but brother Guy said no, you should have a pleasant room; and when Guy says a thing, it's so. It's nice here, and close to me. See, I'm right here," and Jessie opened a door leading directly to her own sleeping-room. "Here's one trunk," she continued, as a servant brought up and set down, a little contemptuously, the small hair-cloth box containing Maddy's wardrobe. "Here's one where's the rest?" and she was flying after Tom, when Maddy stopped her, saying:

"I have but one;—that's all."

"Only that little, teenty thing? How funny! Why, mamma carried three most as big as my bed to Saratoga. You can't have many dresses. What are you going to wear to dinner?"

"I've been to dinner." And Maddy looked up in some surprise.

"You have! We never have it till five, when Guy is at home; but now they are gone, Mrs. Noah says we will have it at one, as folks ought to do. To-day I coaxed her to wait till you came, and the table is all set out so nicely for two. Can you carve, and do you like green turtle soup?"

Maddy was bewildered, but managed to reply that she could not carve, that she never saw any green turtle soup, and that she supposed she should wear to dinner the dress she had on.

"Why, we always change, even Mrs. Noah," Jessie exclaimed, bending over the open trunk, and examining its contents.

Two calicoes, a blue muslin, a gingham, and a delaine, besides the one she had on—that was the sum total of Maddy's wardrobe, and Jessie glanced at it a little ruefully as Maddy carefully shook out the nicely-folded dresses and laid them upon the bed.

Maddy had seen the look Jessie gave the dresses, and for the first time there dawned upon her mind the possibility that her plain apparel, and ignorance of the ways of Aikenside, might be to her the cause of much mortification.

"And grandma said they were so nice, too, and did them up so carefully," she said, her lip beginning to quiver, and her eyes filling with tears, as thoughts of home came rushing over her.

She could not force them back, and laying her head upon the top of the despoiled hair trunk, she sobbed aloud. Guy Remington's private room was in the hall, and as the doctor knew a book was to have been left there for him, he took the liberty of getting it; passing Maddy's door he heard the low sound of weeping, and looking in, saw her where she sat or rather knelt upon the floor.

"Homesick so soon?" he said, advancing to her side, and then, amid a torrent of tears, the whole came out.

Maddy never could do as they did there, and everybody would laugh at her so for an awkward thing; she never knew that folks ate dinner at 5 instead of 12—she should surely starve to death; she couldn't carve—she could not eat mud-turtle soup, and she did not know which dress to wear for dinner—would the doctor tell her? There they were, and she pointed to the bed, only five, and she knew Jessie thought it so mean.

Such was the substance of Maddy's passionate outpouring of her griefs to the highly-perplexed doctor, who, after quieting her somewhat, ascertained that the greatest present trouble was the deciding what dress was suitable to the occasion. The doctor had never made dress his study, but as it happened he liked blue, and so suggested it, as the one most likely to be becoming.

"That!" and Maddy looked confounded.

"Why, grandmas never lets me wear that except on Sunday; that's my very best dress."

"Poor child; I'm not sure it was right for you to come here where the life is so different from the quiet, unpretentious one you have led," the doctor thought, but he merely said: "It's my impression they wear their best dresses here all the time."

"But what shall I do when that's worn out! Oh, dear, dear I wish I had not come!" and another impetuous fit of weeping ensued, in the midst of which Jessie came back, greatly disturbed on Maddy's account, and asking, eagerly, what was the matter.

Very adroitly the doctor managed to draw Jessie aside, while as well as he was able he gave her a few hints with regard to her intercourse with Maddy, and Jessie, who seemed intuitively to understand him, went back to the weeping girl, soothing her much as a little mother would have soothed her child. They would have such nice times, when Maddy got used to their ways, which would not take long, and nobody would laugh at her, she said, when Maddy expressed her fears on that point.

"You are too pretty, even if you do make mistakes!" and then she went into ecstasies over the blue muslin, which was becoming to Maddy and greatly enhanced her girlish beauty. The tear-stains were all washed away, Jessie using very freely her mother's *eau-de-cologne*, and making Maddy's cheeks very red with rubbing, the nut-brown hair was brushed until it shone like satin, a little narrow band of black velvet ribbon was pinned about Maddy's neck, and then she was ready for that terrible ordeal, her first dinner at Aikenside. The doctor was going to stay and that revived her somewhat.

"You must come to the housekeeper's room and see her first," Jessie said, and with a beating heart and brain bewildered by the elegant furniture which met her at every turn, Maddy followed to where the dreaded Mrs. Noah, in rustling black silk and a thread lace collar, sat sewing, and greatly enjoyed the leisure she had in her master's absence.

(To be continued.)