LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP.

By Mrs. Alexander.

"If I could induce her to give me any clew to guide us," said Neville in one of their numerous consultations, "but I fear she will not. To say truth, I am afraid to ask her."

"Afraid! Pshaw! Let me send Simmons to reconnoitre."

"I would rather go myself," returned Neville.

"You will look so confoundedly suspicious."

"I will have a try though," said our hero.

Accordingly about midday, when all St. John's Woods was at luncheon, a tall, mustached man might have been seen sauntering, in a purposeless way, up and down the devious turnings of that refined locality, and ultimately pausing at the junction of Warrington Terrace and Carlingford Villas. He looked round, and stood as if lost in thought, till the sound of a wheezy, aggravating cough caught his attention. He turned and saw, niched in a convenient corner, a grayish brownish bundle of tolerable dimensions, surmounted by a crunched bonnet, under which further inspection elucidated a withered, russet face, with twinkling watery eyes, and a big helpless looking mouth. The feet of the figure were propped up on a wooden footstool, and beside her, on a small, low table, was a basket of oranges and some stout bunches of wallflowers.

"Ugh, ugh!" gasped the old woman. "Buy a purty posy from a poor widdy, whose heart is bruck with the cough, and the Lord will reward you. I haven't sold a ha'porth this blessed day."

"Why do you stick to so unfavorable a situation," said Neville, idly entering into talk with her.

"Oh! sure more times I've better luck. The young ladies, God bless them! do be tender-hearted to the poor widdy, God bless them! but none of them give me a penny to-day."

At the mention of young ladies, Neville pricked up his ears.

"What young ladies?" he asked in a careless tone.

"Sure, the young ladies out of the Simmiuaries; they do be marching down like regiments of soldiers in a morning, and they give a poor soul a copper now and again. But there's one ov'em—the Lord in Heaven look down upon her! She buys mee flowers, and spakes like an angel. Ah! if the rich always knew the valley of a kind word—ugh, ugh!—Oh, Lord!"

"And who is this angel of a young lady?" said Neville, dimly expecting to hear the beloved name.

"Faith! I dunno her name; but every Thursday and Saturday, as reg'lar as the day comes, she passes mee place, and has a kind word and a trifle of talk."

"Ha! And does she live near?"

"At number twenty-two—no less—a big house, there to the right, forenent you. Faith, she's a grand lady, and as purty a cratur' as your eyes 'ud rest upon."

Number twenty-two was Miss Redoubt's famous establishment—it must be Marie Delvigne!

"I think I know the young lady you mean," said Neville, with diplomatic skill, "a short fair girl!"

"No—faith," said the old woman. "Her eyes is like two sloes, and her hair's as black as your hat, an' she has a color like a rose. The blessin' of Heaven be with her. Hasn't she a lucky mark—a brown mole on her left cheek—and may luck attind her! Won't your honor buy a posy from a poor widdy?"

"None to-day; but there's a shilling for you. Good morning."

"The Heavens be your bed?" exclaimed the astonished widdy: "and—ugh! ugh! ——"

An opportune fit of coughing cut short her eloquence, as Neville turned hastily away, for signs of life were beginning to show themselves.

CHAPTER V.

Compton and his friend had various and different engagements during the rest of the next day; and it was not till Sunday morning that they met again, when Sir Frederic at a glance saw that Neville looked "all astray."

"I've been looking everywhere for you, Compton," he said. "Here's a sell? didn't see her—didn't meet her! Wandered about that confounded Park till the police looked at me suspiciously; could get no trace of her! What's to be done?"

"Done?" repeated Compton. "Now is your time for the letter; write and have it ready for any chance; we will manage the conveyance afterward. She may have changed the days for her lessons. A thousand things may have happened."

"I'll tell you what I did on Friday," said Neville, and proceeded to describe his interview with the orange woman.

"Capital!" said Sir Frederic, as he concluded. "The widdy shall be Cupid's messenger."

"No; that will never do. I shall manage better in some way."

The composition of this epistle taxed Neville's powers rather severely; and after in vain endeavoring to render it an elegant production, he threw all his scribblings into the fire and dashed off an earnest, simple, straightforward letter, in which he told the heiress of his sudden and deep passion—of the difficulties which surrounded him—of the opposition which their proposed marriage would call forth, and the complication its publicity would add to the troubles in which he was already plunged, but from which he hoped ere long to extricate himself.

"Once you are my own," it proceeded "everything seems possible. With you by my side, life has no task I do not feel, capable of accomplishing. Trust to me, and your future shall be my tenderest care," etc., etc.

In short, Neville, thoroughly in earnest, produced a very readable letter, and one well calculated to make a heart, already full of him, all his own. He concluded by an impassioned entreaty that she would give him some opportunity of speaking to her—of pleading his cause personally, when he could better explain his hopes and fears.

"She will not hesitate long," he said to Sir Frederic. "She will put me out of pain one way or the other; for if ever woman was true and upright she is, though there is just the least dash of coquetry about her—just enough to set one burning steadily, like a slow match! It is a wonderful position, Compton, to be head and ears in love with the right person!"

"By Jove! you may say so."

"Now," continued Neville, "I'll be off to my new acquaintance, the old apple woman, and try to manage some means of conveying this"—tapping the letter. "I suppose the old lady does not attend divine service?" (It was Sunday.)

"I dare say by the time you reach Carlingford Terrace she will be at her post. The people will be feeding from one to two, so you'll have the field for yourself. Shall I come with you?"

"No. She might take fright at two inquirers. Do you want to come?"

"Well, I'd like to see that little pale girl again."

Neville frowned; he did not like the idea of Compton seeking a friend of his future wife's. He did not think such seeking could end well.

In spite of his attempts to delay, Neville was rather too soon at the apple woman's corner, and encountered the whole tide of schools returning from church,

"By Jove!" he often exclaimed in after years, describing it. "It was like shoals of mackerel or herrings sweeping over space, and overwhelming you like an avalanche. Regiments of them, so demure and steady that I felt utterly abashed and out of countenance before them."

Third or fourth of these detachments came Miss Redoubt's troop, among the most distinguished and highly disciplined. the ranks were closed by two young ladies, more mature in age than the others, in whom Neville quickly recognized the friends and namesakes. The beautiful heiress flushed all over with electric rapidity, and then turned pale, as he gravely and silently bowed to them. The little pale French governess took scarce any notice of him. Another moment, and they were hidden from his sight by the gates of No. 22.

Neville's heart beat high. She could not be indifferent to him when her color changed so marvelously. How little she dreamed he had such an important communication for her in his pocket! A few minutes more and almost all stragglers had disappeared. Neville approached the old woman.

"You do not take a holiday, then?" he said good naturedly.

"Faith! I do not," she returned. "Shure Sunday's mee best day. The bits of boys and girls, the cratures do be going up to Hampstead, and stop to buy oranges of a poor widdy. P'raps your honor wants a posy to-day?"

"No, thank you! And your young lady friends, have they been good to you lately?"

"Ah! shure, mee dark eyed darlint has just gone by with the dawshy little white cratur' that's always along wid her; but she never stops when they are all together. She'll be back by and by, maybe, by herself, and then she'll have a kind word for the poor widdy."

Neville paused; he could not surmount an invincible repugnance to put Marie Delvigne in the power of so low and ignorant a creature as he now addressed.

"And where does this angel of yours go to church?" he asked, carelessly.

"Oh! down below there. You'll a'most see the spire beyant the big house at the corner."

"How do you know she goes there?"

"Shure, all the ladies do be going there. Isn't the clargy a great pracher entirely, and curses an' damns us poor papists up and down? Faith! he'll know the differ one day. And sorra a word the Blessed Mary will say for him."

"I might make some opportunity to give her the letter in church," mused Neville. "I'll try."

He strolled on to the church, and met the clerk coming out.

"When does the afternoon service begin?"

"At half past three, sir," returned that functionary, somewhat surprised.

"Who preaches?" continued Neville.

"The Reverend Mr. Jones, sir."

"Oh! thank you."

In a couple of hours he returned and presented himself.

"Could you place me next Miss Redoubt's seat?" he whispered, pressing half a crown into the pew-opener's hand.

"I think I can, sir."

And accordingly, Neville had the felicity of contemplating the back of the adored one's bonnet, through a service that seemed interminable. At last it was over, and Neville managed adroitly to pass with Miss Delvigne, side by side, down the aisle; and, during the transit, slid his letter into the folds of her parasol.

It was neatly done; but as he saw her shrink and change color he whispered in eager accents:

"For God's sake read it!"

It was but a moment's work, and no eye or ear save their own detected what was passing. But Marie's cheek glowed and paled; her brain grew dizzy; she felt how momentous for her was this morning's work. But—she took the letter. What else could she do, without risking a slander? What else could she do, when her heart was yearning for the love of the grave, chivalrous looking stranger, who had sought her so pertinaciously, and whose earnest eyes expressed so much tenderness and admiration?

It was safely in her possession without betrayal; and now two weary days had to come and go before Neville could judge what progress he had made. Nevertheless it was with an unwonted sense of exultation that he met Sir Frederic at dinner.

"Now," said he, "grant I am not quite so clumsy a fellow as you took me for."

"No, by Cupid and Venus! You are within a few lengths of the winning post. She will meet you. You must hurry matters on; do not give her time to think; be married next week; get a license, and all that sort of thing, and be ready for a start."

But Marie Delvigne not only read Neville's letter, she answered it. Two days after his successful stratagem he received a little note—a little tremulously written note, that made him almost fancy he heard the writer's heart beat.

"I may be doing very wrong, yet I *will* see and hear you; I can only do so by missing my lesson on Thursday, and there is always the chance of some one being sent with me. Yet it is the only opportunity I can make. Are you not very unwise to seek me, if it will vex every one? Ah! think well. But I can write no more. May God guide us both!—M. D."

Not even to his confidant Compton would Neville mention this little billet; short and simple as it was, it expressed vividly the mingled trust and fear, the delicacy, the tenderness for the writer.

"Thursday is a deuced long way off," thought Neville, as he read Marie's note over and over again. "I wish I was not weighted with the sense of being a humbug! Will Marie distrust me by and by, when she knows I had the word of her little enigma? Well, at all events, she cannot fail to see that I love her as ardently as ever woman was loved; and that ought to cover a multitude of sins. Poor darling! what a horrible fright she was in when she wrote this! and there are more than forty-eight hours to drag through before I can comfort her."

Neville was greatly moved by the agitation which Marie could not control on meeting him; though her color came often and quickly, it always left her deadly pale, and her eyes looked larger and more wistful than ever.

All the chivalry and tenderness of his nature were drawn forth by the unmistakable signs of her emotion, and he pleaded his cause with earnest truthfulness, that could not fail to insure success. "After all, it can't be such a tremendous undertaking to marry a fellow that is so awfully fond of you as I am!" he concluded, after a long talk and arrangement of plans; "and if you are not frightened by the catalogue I have given you of my difficulties, why, I see nothing to prevent our being as happy as the day is long! I suppose you have not confided in any one at the school?"

"Only to my kind little friend and namesake, and she is quite safe."

"What your friend the—the heiress?" asked Neville.

"Yes; she is very friendless too. Perhaps I—you—we may befriend her hereafter!"

"Of course you shall," said Neville, smilingly to himself; "and must I let you go now? It is deuced hard! You will write directly you can fix a day to visit these friends of yours—what do you call them?—at Bayswater?"

"Madame Lacordeille; they are Southern State people."

"Very well, give me three or four days' notice, and all shall be prepared. God bless you, my darling! I shall have you before my eyes day and night till we meet again! Do not torment yourself;—a month hence you will wonder why you ever hesitated to promise yourself to me!"

CHAPTER VI.

"What is the matter with you, Mademoiselle Delvigne?" asked Miss Redoubt, with sudden, unusual curiosity, one afternoon about this time. "I do hope you are not sickening for anything! It would be most inconvenient just now. You are looking like a ghost, and I am told you burst out crying in the French class this morning!—a great sign of weakness. No girl will look up to a teacher who *cries*," with contemptuous emphasis.

"I do not see why girls are to expect their governesses to be more than human," said Miss Delvigne, the heiress, aggressively.

"You know nothing about it, my dear!" said the stern mistress of the establishment, "though it is very sweet of you to take Mademoiselle's part. It is my aim ever to be just and considerate, and I feel I am both in insisting on Mademoiselle telling me the truth as to the state of her health. I have a solemn and sacred charge intrusted to me—the spiritual and temporal and sanatory welfare of twelve young ladies of distinction; and I must act accordingly."

This cross examination took place in an apartment on an upper story, known as the study, where the young ladies prepared their lessons, etc., now only tenanted by the two friends and namesakes."

"Mademoiselle," as she was generally called certainly looked ill—pale, downcast, tremulous, and paused a moment before she replied:

"I do not feel quite myself, Madame; but there is nothing to alarm you: it is more nervousness than bodily indisposition which almost unfits me for my duties. I inherit an excitable nature."

"Inherit excitability! this is alarming!" cried Miss Redoubt.

"I think," resumed Marie, coloring, hesitating, and showing signs of confusion, "if I had a holiday—a little rest—I might recover."

"Holiday—rest! in the very busiest part of the term! Impossible! If you want rest, you must be content to give up yo appointment, Mademoiselle, and give leave to fill your place."

"If you insist upon it I must," return Marie, still in the same low, timid tone. thought next week, during the Easter h days, I might have a few days' leave absence. I might go to my friend, Mada Lacordeille, and recover my streng or—"

"I can allow nothing of the kind," cri Miss Redoubt; "Miss Lewis and M Marsden will be here, and I have promi Miss Morris and Miss Green, the two E lish governesses, permission to go and their friends; so if you insist on going Mademoiselle, you need not return."

There was a moment's silence; the N Orleans heiress opened her lips to spe and closed them again resolutely, look from one to the other with the deep interest and kindling eyes. Mademoisle had risen from her seat when Miss Redoubt first addressed her, and now remaind standing with downcast eyes, and hands that clasped each other nervously.

There was no indecision, however, in her voice, as she replied calmly and distinctly, "Very well, Madame, I accept your dismissal."

"And pray what do you intend to do, Mademoiselle? If I am reluctantly obliged to state that your health and strength are unequal to your work you will not find so easy to procure another engagement."

"I must take my chance, Madame. If I am unsuccessful I must return to Par to my people."

"I consider you exceedingly weak and foolish, but perhaps I may be the gain in the end; moral weakness such as yours could never attain the standard I expect from my employés."

With a haughty aspect Miss Redoubt sailed out of the room. Miss Delvigne started up and shook her small fist at the retreating figure. "Nasty disagreeable old cat!" she exclaimed.

"What is the meaning of it all? Are you ill? Are you really going away, or will you make it up?"

Mademoiselle Delvigne stood quite still and silent, gazing with an odd fixed, strained look toward the window, evidently not seeing any of the objects which surrounded her.

"Marie, dearest, speak to me! something is the matter, more than I know. I you leave, how desolate I shall be! Do speak, Marie!" putting her arms round her. "You can trust me, and I am sure you are in awful trouble."

"No, not exactly trouble, but in terrible dread and agitation," she returned in a low quick tone, glancing round nervously. "I think we are safe for a little while; there are some visitors coming up the garden, and the girls are all out. Oh, *ma mie!* I ought not to tell you, but I must, or I shall lose my head! Oh, dearest be true to me!"

"I never was false in my life," said the New Orleans girl proudly. "Why, Marie, what *is* the matter?" for the young French governess clasped her tightly, and, laying her head on her shoulder, burst into a flood of tears, weeping quietly, intensely, and struggling to suppress her sobs.

"*Chere amie*," she whispered when she was a little calmer, "I want to leave this house; I want to go quite away, but I fear to tell you why—you may perhaps think me wrong, imprudent. I am afraid myself I am, yet I cannot draw back."

"What on earth are you going to do?" exclaimed her friend, opening her dark eyes in amazement. "You are surely not going to marry any one?"

"I am," whispered Mademoiselle Delvigne, pressing her brow upon the heiress' hands, which she held in hers. "I am going away with a man I have only known about two months, a comparative stranger, of whose nature and disposition and history I know nothing. Oh! I see how imprudent, how bold, how unwomanly it all is, as well as Miss Redoubt herself could; and yet when *he* is with me I forget all this, and only feel unbounded trust in him, and that it is impossible to refuse him, or let him go."

"I suppose 'he' is that Captain Neville?"

"Yes; how do you know?"

"I have eyes in my head, and I have noticed *his* when we have met him, and the odd way he has been appearing every now and then in this neighborhood. I say, dear! it is an awfully wild thing to do!" Her clasp of her friend's hand tightened as she spoke.

"It is! If three months ago any one had told me that I could be tempted to such a step, I should have been infinitely offended, and denied the imputation; yet ——"

She stopped, and bit her lip to keep back the sobs that would heave her bosom. "And yet you are going to do it," added Miss Delvigne.

"Ah! you despise me—you think me mad, infatuated! *You* would never do such a thing!"

"How do you know?" asked the other, smiling. "Nobody ever made love to *me*, and asked me to run away with him! At the same time, I wish you would not do it, Marie. Why doesn't this man come here and see you, and ask you to be his wife openly? I am sure he looks bold and resolute enough to do anything, and old enough to be his own master too."

"He does—he is," said Marie eagerly. "But there are reasons he has fully explained to me. He is in debt and difficulties, and he has some hopes of his brother or some relation assisting him; but if this relation knew that Guy was going to be married he would make objections, and be implacable, whereas if Guy is actually married he cannot help it, and will not be so hard."

"I don't see how Captain Neville makes that out," said the quick witted American. "Anyhow, it is a bad look out for you. Suppose Captain Neville's relatives leave him in the lurch? What is to become of you?"

"Oh! Guy says the sale of his commission will put him right, and we must just go away to New Zealand or Australia, and struggle on together."

"Does he?" cried the heiress, much struck by this proof of devotion and faithfulness. "Then he must be a real good fellow if he will give up everything for you, and you ought to follow him to the ends of the earth."

"I think," whispered Marie, resting her glowing cheek against her friend's shoulder, to avoid her eyes—"Yes, I do think he loves me—and Oh! dearest, how can I refuse him? Look what my life is! I am a mere drudge—ill paid, uncared for. If I look ill I am taken to task for possibly defrauding my employers by physical inability; all my life long I have known I was a burden to be got rid off as soon as possible! Except your dear self no one seems to consider me a second thought. If I dare for a moment forget that I am a machine I am soon pushed back into my groove.

(To be continued.)

Curious Patents.

Some investigating person has furnished the New York *Times* with a brief list of patents on small things which in many instances have proved great mines of wealth to the lucky discoverer. The list might be extended to a much larger number, but we only state those given in the *Times*. Among these trifles is the favorite toy—the "return ball"—a wooden ball with an elastic string attached, selling for ten cents each, but yielding to its patentee an income equal to $50,000 a year. The rubber tip on the end of lead pencils affords the owner of the royalty an independent fortune. The inventor of the gummed newspaper wrapper is also a rich man. The gimlet pointed screw has evolved more wealth than most silver mines, and the man who first thought of putting copper tips to children's shoes is as well off as if his father had left him $2,000,000 in United States bonds. Although roller skates are not so much used in countries where ice is abundant, in South America, especially in Brazil, they are very highly esteemed, and have yielded over $1,000,000 to the inventor. But he had to spend fully $125,000 in England alone fighting infringements. The "dancing Jim Crow," a toy, provides an annual income of $75,000 to its inventor, and the common needle threader is worth $10,000 a year to the man who thought of it. The "drive well" was an idea of Colonel Green, whose troops, during the war, were in want of water. He conceived the notion of driving a two-inch tube into the ground until water was reached and then attaching a pump. This simple contrivance was patented after the war, and the tens of thousands of farmers who have adopted it have been obliged to pay him a royalty, a moderate estimate of which is placed at $3,000,000. The spring window shade yields an income of $100,000 a year; the stylographic pen also brings in $100,000 yearly; the marking pen, for shading in different colors, $100,000; rubber stamps the same. A very large fortune has been reaped by a western miner, who, ten years since, invented a metal rivet or eyelet at each end of the mouth of coat and pants pockets to resist the strain caused by the carriage of pieces of ore and heavy tools.

Why Oysters Should be Eaten Raw.

(New York Sun.)

Why oysters should be eaten raw is explained by Dr. Wm. Roberts in his lecture on "Digestion." He says that the general practice of eating the oyster raw is evidence that the popular judgment upon matters of diet is usually trustworthy. The fawn-colored mass, which is the delicious portion of the fish, is its liver, and is simply a mass of glycogen. Associated with the glycogen, but withheld from actual contact with it during life, is its appropriate digestive ferment—the hepatic diastase. The mere crushing of the oyster between the teeth brings these two bodies together, and the glycogen is at once digested without any other help than the diastase. The raw, or merely warmed, oyster is self-digestive. But the advantage of this provision is wholly lost by cooking, for the heat immediately destroys the associated ferment, and a cooked oyster has to be digested, like any other food, by the eater's own digestive powers.

"My dear sir, do you want to ruin your digestion?" asked Professor Houghton, of Trinity College, one day of a friend who had ordered brandy and water with his oysters in a Dublin restaurant.

Then he sent for a glass of brandy and a glass of Guinness' XX, and put an oyster in each. In a very short time there lay in the bottom of the glass of brandy a tough, leathery substance resembling the finger of a kid glove, while in the porter there was hardly a trace of the oyster to be found.

After Dining with Sir John Willoughby.

At the Marlborough Street Police Court yesterday Mr. Michael Sandys and Mr. Charles Browne, of Onslow Gardens, described as gentlemen, were charged with being drunk and disorderly. A constable stated that on Sunday morning he saw Sandys dancing with a woman in the streets. He requested him to go away, but he would not, put his arm round his (witness') neck and attempted to dance with him. Brown then got up a lamp-post and read something from a newspaper as to the duties of the police. He took Sandys into the station. Browne ran in also and was detained. It was urged for the defence that the defendants had been dining with Sir John Willoughby on his return from Egypt, and on leaving the club there was some "chaffing" with the policemen, and Browne got up a lamp post and read extracts from Mr. Howard Vincent's book on the duties of policemen. Sir John Willoughby was called, and stated that the defendants were not drunk. Asked by the magistrate what he considered a drunken man, Sir John replied that when a man was unconscious of what he was doing he considered him to be drunk. Mr. Newton said there was some doubt about the matter and dismissed the cases, but he thought gentlemen should not dance in the streets or climb lamp-posts.—*Pall Mall Gazette.*

The Princess Beatrice likes speckled heather tweeds.

If you don't pay your rent," said a cruel and implacable landlord, "I will certainly expose you publicly." The dejected debtor lifted his streaming eyes to his persecutor and cried, "Oh, my friend, I beg you not to do that; I would even prefer to have you increase my rent."

In Fiji thirty years ago war was made quite as much with a view to dining off captives, who were actually carefully fattened before slaughter, as for any other cause. In some cases meat was cut, cooked and eaten in the presence of the victim, who had previously been compelled to dig the oven and collect the wood for heating it. The sick were buried alive, and the death of a great man was celebrated by a general strangling of widows. Beside every great chief's house living beings were buried. They had to stand clasping the supporting pillars while earth was rolled over them. When a chief launched a new canoe a number of persons were bound hand and foot and laid on the ground to act as rollers.