The Power of Persuasion

Or Lady Caraven's Labor of Love.

CHAPTER X.

Lady Caraven felt something like despair. Was such a life, after all, worth having? Was her title worth undergoing so much for? She was living without hope, without love, without happiness, subject to much impertinence. Surely life was not usually like this, or why did people talk of its brightness, its beauty? There was nothing to which she clung in the life she was leading. She would have separated herself from Ravensmere, and all that it contained—except Sir Raoul—without a sigh; it was even worse than that—she disliked all belonging to it.

Why should she submit any longer? She would rather be a governess, rudely treated by an upstart woman, than a countess neglected and despised by her own husband, and insulted by his friends. She would rather forego, every luxury, and work for her daily bread, than bear this life any longer. Why should she? The earl had married her for her money; now he had it — nothing could take it from him. Her father had sold her for a title; he could call himself the father of Lady Caraven—nothing could undo that. But she was indisposed any longer to be the victim of both. She would seek her freedom and would find it.

She walked with head erect, with flushed face and angry eyes, through the splendid rooms. They were all more or less occupied. In the library some gentlemen were writing letters—the billiard-room was always engaged—the ladies of the party occupied different apartments. It seemed to her that nowhere would she find peace. Her whole soul was in a fever of unrest, a tumult of sadness and weariness. Her heart ached, her head throbbed. She longed with desperate longing for a few minutes' repose; it seemed to her that her life was hurrying on like a swift river into an unknown sea. She wanted to stop and see whither it was going. Everywhere there was the same noise—the deep voices and deep laughter of men, the light tones and gay laughter of women. There was not a spot in the whole place for rest. She pressed her hands against the temples that throbbed so violently. She looked around her half irresolutely. Whither should she go? Then she bethought herself of the pleasaunce — the only spot where she could even imagine herself alone.

The pleasaunce must have been constructed by some one who knew how human nature longed to rest. Few of the Ravensmere people knew of its existence—the visitors did not. Some of the servants were in perfect ignorance as to its whereabouts. It was constructed for the sole and exclusive use of the Ladies Caraven. Rumor told strange stories of one of the daughters of the house who had been born with a deformity in the face, so terrible that she was unfit for human eyes to gaze on. The earl, her father, never permitted her to leave the house, and this garden had been constructed entirely for her use. It was inclosed between four high walls, and those walls were covered with a luxuriant growth of ivy. No windows, no towers, overlooked the garden. The paths were broad and straight, the whole place was a wilderness of flowers.

The young countess bethought herself of this retreat. She had one key of the dark green door that led to it; Sir Raoul had another. She would go thither, she said to herself, and look her life in the face, and then decide what to do with it. It was also dawning across her that she would not be able to bear her trials much longer; that she could not and would not endure them; that there was a brighter life somewhere, which she was determined to find out; that she could not sacrifice her whole life to a shadow of duty; that, in fact, she would go forth free.

Free! The very word made her heart beat quickly. Free! She would no longer be tied to the man whose indolence, whose self-indulgence, whose cold indifference and neglect, whose utter want of interest in his duties irritated and annoyed her every hour of the day, to the handsome, indolent man who allowed fever and disease to run riot in the cottages belonging to him, while he wrung from the tenants all he could get, who abandoned every duty and was satisfied to leave the most solemn of his engagements to a man like John Blantyre.

She was tired of it. She would be free—free to go whither she would Why should she remain? Her father had deceived her—he had told her that she could live without love, that nothing was of any worth except rank, wealth, and position. She had found it to be untrue. Looking back now, she regretted bitterly that she had not decided otherwise, and had not refused to live without love.

She went to the pleasaunce. If she were interrupted there, it could only be by her husband and Sir Raoul; there was no fear of other intruders. A sense of relief came to her when she found herself between the four high walls. The blue sky smiled down upon her, the languid air stirred faintly, the scent of roses came to her on the wind; it was like a reprieve to enter that quiet retreat, and feel alone.

She walked down one of the broad straight paths to where crimson carnations grew side by side with white lilies, and there she seated herself to rest—alone. And it was so sweet to be alone. There was no sound of men's voices or of light laughter; no sneer could reach her where she was; there was nothing but the blue sky above, and the breath of the sweet western wind. She was shut out from all sounds—alone, with the thread of her life in her hands.

It was a dreary tangle, a miserable disappointment. She was tired and weary. Looking back, she thought she must have been mad to sacrifice herself as she had done; married for her money, sold for a title, her own will, her own womanhood had never asserted itself. Her handsome indolent husband did nothing but treat her with indifference and contempt. She could do nothing for him. He was on the way to ruin. How could she arrest him? His whole life was a round of senseless pleasure from which she could never divert him. He had all that he wanted—her money. Now surely she could go free—free to lead a more congenial life, where she would not live in the midst of annoyances and vexations.

She would go and live in France or Italy—anywhere away from England! Her father might be angry. She would not heed it. He had shown but little love for her; she would not consider him. The only regret she felt—and it was a deep one—was for Sir Raoul. Sir Raoul, the only human being who cared for her—what would he say when he knew that she was going? He would miss her so terribly; but, even for his sake, dear as he was to her, she could not stay. He would miss her, he who loved her with a true loyal love; but she would tell him how wretched she was, how utterly miserable, and then he would see that she must go.

Suddenly—she could not tell why—the self-command of long years broke down. Her pride, her courage, her high spirit, the proud sense of resentment that had sustained her, broke down, and she wept as she had seldom wept in her life before. The passionate tears seemed to relieve her. It was a luxury to weep there alone—for once to give herself up to a full sense of her misery, of her disappointment, of her blighted life — for once to dare to look the truth full in the face, and own to herself that she was one of the most miserable, most wretched girls in the whole wide world.

She sobbed out the words. It was a relief to say them—a relief to say even to herself that she was so miserable; she had been so proudly reticent, so self-restrained.

Suddenly a hand was laid upon her shoulder, and, looking up, she saw Sir Raoul standing by her side. In his pale face, worn with pain and suffering, she saw infinite pity, infinite love; compassion and tenderness shone in her eyes. He had never looked so true and so noble as he did just then. He bent over her.

"Hildred, poor child, is it so bad as this?" he asked.

"It is so bad," she said, "that it could not be worse, Raoul—nothing could be worse. I am tired of it. I am going away."

"Going away!" he repeated, slowly. "That is what I feared. Has your patience, your forbearance, come to an end at last, Hildred?"

"Yes," she replied, truthfully, "it has at last."

He was silent for a few minutes, and then, as she looked up at him, a great awe stole over her. His eyes were raised to the clear skies, his lips moved. Surely in a picture she had seen a figure something like his, with a serene light on the brow. Her anger, her impatience, her bitter contempt and dislike seemed to fall away from her, even from that one look at his face. She rose suddenly into something nobler than a weeping, vengeful, unhappy woman.

"You are going away, Hildred—you can bear it no longer? Poor child! This reminds me of an hour I spent once with a soldier who was determined to desert his post and fly."

"I am not a soldier," she said, with a more pitiful smile.

"We will talk it over," he replied; and he seated himself by the crimson carnations by her side. "I will tell you all I think," he said, "and we will talk it over; then you shall decide."

She was trying to harden her heart against him, to say to herself that, no matter what he thought, urged, or said, it should make no difference—she would go away. He was sensitive and proud, he was tender of heart, but how could he understand her case? That which tortured her was nothing to him.

He looked at her with the same sweet, noble compassion that seemed to her almost more than human.

"Hildred," he said, in a low voice, "will you trust me wholly? Will you tell me the true story of your marriage?"

"Do you not know it, Raoul? It seems to be shameful I have no wish to repeat it."

"I know something of it," he replied; "but not the whole truth. I know that you will tell it to me. I ask you as a physician asks. I must know the whole truth before I can advise. Tell me one thing — did you love your husband at all before your marriage?"

"No," she replied; "not in the least."

"Will you tell me again why you, a woman naturally noble, naturally tender and true of heart, married without love?"

She glanced at him, her beautiful face full of perplexity; she had gathered a crimson carnation, and was holding it between her slender fingers.

"I will tell you, Raoul. I asked my father if love were necessary for happiness, and he said 'No.' I believed him; hence my mistake."

"Your father deceived you.:'

"He did deceive me," she replied.

He looked at the downcast face.

"Poor child!" said the grave voice again.

"Yes, I was deeply to be pitied. I was sorry even for myself. What made it worse was that in time I was beginning to care very much for my husband. If he had been kind to me I should have loved him now" — and, stopping suddenly, she wrung her hands in terrible despair. "Now," she continued, "I dislike him—I almost hate him."

The beautiful face flushed hotly — the dark eyes were full of a strange light.

"I am alarmed at myself," she went on. "I did not know that it was within me—this power of hatred. I am so frightened that I am going away, Raoul. My patience has failed me."

"It is a sad story. Tell me, Hildred—why does your patience fail? I love Ulric—I love you; I can judge between you. Why does your patience fail?"

"I do not like speaking of it," she began. "You must see, Raoul, as well as I do—you must understand. How could any one help despising and disliking a man who lives for himself, who cares for nothing but his own pleasure, and leaves every duty neglected? How can I love a man who married me only for my money, despising me the while? — who has not since marriage shown me the ordinary civility that a gentleman never fails to show to a lady? He is selfish, indolent—oh, Raoul! I do not like saying this, but if you saw his cruel neglect, his cruel oppression—if you knew how carelessly he leaves everything to John Blantyre, how heedless he is as to the claims of justice, you would be sorry for me!"

"I see," he replied, quietly. "Now tell me, Hildred—I know you will speak quite frankly—do you see one redeeming quality amid all your husband's faults?"

She thought long before she answered him, and then she looked into his face.

"I am afraid not—I do not remember one. Yes, there is one; I have never heard him speak falsely."

Sir Raoul's face cleared.

"Ulric was a truthful boy," he said. "Do you know of anything else in his favor?"

She thought again.

"I think," she replied, even more slowly, "that he is tender-hearted. He is not cruel; he does not like to see people suffer; he is cruel only to me."

"True in word and tender of heart —those are two good qualities; we know that he has a handsome face, an easy grace of manner, a musical voice. You see I am trying to discover his good qualities. I think that Ulric Caraven has in him the elements of a noble character, Hildred. Give to a sculptor a block of shapeless marble, and what does he fashion from it?"

"A beautiful statue," she replied.

"True. Given a shapeless mass of qualities, good and bad intermixed, I say that a good woman from them can mold a beautiful character. Listen—I will tell you how."

He had drawn nearer to her, and the leaves of the crimson carnation fell at his feet; the western wind seemed to pause and listen—it fell with a faint, subdued sigh.

"Your life lies before you now, divided into two paths. Granted that you have been victimized, that you have been married for your money, that you have been sold, as it were, for a title, that your girlish romance and your womanly tenderness have been alike outraged, that you have been deceived, persuaded that you could live happily without love, and that you find it all a mistake."

"Yes," she repeated, "all a mistake."

"You have borne your fate bravely as yet, but now you have tired of it; your courage and patience have failed—you have told me so, and I can plainly see that in your own mind you are seeking some means of escape. Is it not so?"

(To Be Continued).

Piles To prove to you that Dr. Chase's Ointment is a certain and absolute cure for each and every form of itching, bleeding and protruding piles, the manufacturers have guaranteed it. See testimonials in the daily press and ask your neighbors what they think of it. You can use it and get your money back if not cured. 60c a box, at all dealers or EDMANSON, BATES & CO., Toronto.

Dr. Chase's Ointment

ROUGH ON THE STRANGER.

In a well known park in Germany there is a large bear's den, which lies at a lower level than the ground about it and is surrounded by a railing.

One day a stranger, while leaning over the rail, lost his balance and fell into the pit. He struck by the side of a large grizzly bear, which at once seized the man's leg in his mouth and completely crushed it. Some bystanders, by the aid of ropes and poles, succeeded in getting the unfortunate man out of the den. He lay in a fainting condition. At this point a policeman stepped up to him.

"I place you under arrest," he said to the wounded man.

"Arrest ! What for ?" immediately gasped the victim.

"For violating the rules of the park," said the policeman. "Don't you see that notice there ?"

He pointed to a sign over the railings of the bear's den, which read :

"It is forbidden to feed the animals."

A POPULAR BELIEF.

THAT RHEUMATISM IS DUE TO COLD, WET WEATHER.

Such Conditions Aggravate the Trouble, But it is Now Known to Be a Disease of the Blood —Outward Applications Cannot Cure It.

The once popular belief that rheumatism was entirely the result of exposure to cold or dampness, is now known to be a mistake. The disease may be aggravated by exposure, but the root of the trouble lies in the blood, and must be treated through it. Liniments and outward applications never cure, while Dr. Williams' Pink Pills always cure because they make new, rich, red blood, in which disease finds lodgment impossible. Concerning the use of these pills Mr. A. G. Lacombe, Sorel, Que., says :—"For upwards of five years I was a victim to the tortures of rheumatism. At times the pains in my knees, shoulders and hip were almost past endurance. At other times I could not dress myself without assistance. I tried several remedies, some of them very costly, without getting any more than temporary relief at the most. At this juncture a friend urged me to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and spoke so highly of the pills that I decided to try them. Almost from the very first these pills helped me, and by the time I had taken seven or eight boxes, every twinge of rheumatism had disappeared, and I was feeling better that I had for years. I would strongly advise similar sufferers to give Dr. Williams' Pink Pills a fair trial, as I am confident they will not only drive away all pains and aches, but leave you strong, active and happy."

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are the greatest tonic medicine in the world. These pills not only cure rheumatism, but all troubles whose origin comes from poor blood or weak nerves, such as anaemia, consumption, neuralgia, kidney trouble, St. Vitus' dance, partial paralysis and the irregularities which make the lives of so many women a source of misery. Some dealers offer substitutes, and in order to protect yourself you must see that the full name "Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People" is on the wrapper around every box. Sold by all dealers or sent by mail, post paid, at 50 cents a box or six boxes for $2.50, by writing direct to The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

"We've got to economize," said Mr. Gargoyle to his wife. "Very well, dear," replied the good woman, cheerfully. "You shave yourself, and I'll cut your hair."

Elderly Lady—"Aren't you ashamed to be seen smoking cigarettes, little boy?" Little Boy—"Sure, I am; but wot's a feller to do when he ain't got the price of a cigar?"

A BABY CHANGED.

The Mother Tells How It Was Accomplished.

"A wonderful change," is the verdict of a lady correspondent who writes us about her little one. "I take pleasure," writes Mrs. R. B. Bickford, of Glen Sutton, Que., "in certifying to the merits of Baby's Own Tablets, as I have found them a sure and reliable remedy. My baby was troubled with indigestion, and was teething and cross and restless, and the use of the Tablets made a wonderful change. I think the timely use of Baby's Own Tablets might save many a dear little life, and I would recommend mothers to keep them in the house."

The opinion of this wise mother is echoed by other correspondents. Baby's Own Tablets give such comfort and relief to a sick baby, they so infallibly produce calm, peaceful sleep, that you would almost think them a narcotic. But they are not. They are only a health-giver for children of any age. They cannot possibly do harm—they always do good. May be had from druggists, or by mail, post paid, at 25 cents a box, by writing direct to the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont., or Schenectady, N.Y.

Applicant—I'd like to get a job as track-walker.
Railroad Superintendent—Any experience ?
Applicant—I used to be an actor.

Skin on Fire With Eczema.

Mr. McDougall Was for Twelve Years a Dreadful Sufferer—Now Proclaims the Virtues of Dr. Chase's Ointment.

Eczema's itch is torture, the skin seems on fire with the burning, stinging humor; at times it becomes almost unbearable, and in desperation you could tear the skin to pieces. You dare not exercise for fear of aggravating the itching, neither can you sleep, for no sooner does the body become warm than the trouble begins, and instead of restful, refreshing sleep, it is scratch, scratch, scratch all night long. There is scarcely a moment's respite from this maddening malady at any time. Of course you have tried nearly all the washes, salves, lotions and medicated soaps, but like thousands of others, have been disappointed and disgusted.

Mr. Alex. McDougall, postmaster, Broad Cove Marsh, N.S., writes :—"For twelve years I was a great sufferer from eczema on the inside of the leg. There was a raw patch of flesh about three inches square, and the itching was something fearful. One-half box of Dr. Chase's Ointment completely cured me, took away the itching and healed up the sore. I have no hesitation in recommending it as a wonderful cure for itching skin disease."

You may be skeptical regarding the ability of Dr. Chase's Ointment to cure you. Most people are, after trying in vain to get relief from a host of remedies, but Dr. Chase's Ointment will not disappoint you. You will be surprised at the marvellous control which it has over all itching, burning inflammation of the skin, and the wonderful healing powers which it possesses. It takes time to thoroughly cure eczema, but Dr. Chase's Ointment will do it. You will find relief after a few applications, and gradually and naturally the cure will follow. Besides being a positive cure for eczema, Dr. Chase's Ointment comes useful in a hundred ways in every home for every form of skin irritation and eruption, chapped skin and chilblains. 60 cents a box, at all dealers, or Edmanson, Bates & Co., Toronto.