The Power of Persuasion

Or Lady Caraven's Labor of Love.

CHAPTER XIV.

Lady Caraven was pleased as she dressed for dinner. She recalled the happy faces, the grateful words that she had seen and heard but a few hours before at Bromhill; it was worth living for, this power of doing good. She had seen something in her husband's face that day which had surprised her—something that drove away the indolent, easy expression. Was the sleeping lion roused at last? Had her passionate words, her keen indignation moved him? Had he grown ashamed of his indolence? Had he tired of his pleasures?

Sitting opposite to him at the dinner table, she looked at him attentively. Certainly there was a change in his face. It was brighter, keener, more on the alert; the eyes were full of light; he seemed interested in what was going on. Once during dinner she met Sir Raoul's glance, and it was full of pleased surprise.

"Now is my time," though Hildred; "now I may secure what I want."

When the gentlemen came into the drawing room she made herself most fascinating and charming. She sang, she talked; the whole party thought her exceedingly entertaining. It was when her husband was looking most pleased, and listening to her with real interest, that she went up to him.

"I have a little favor to ask of you," she said. "Will you give me five minutes of your time this evening?"

His look was one of pleased, bright expectation.

"Assuredly, Hildred — as long as you like. I am beginning to think that my interviews with you are welcome ones."

So when most of the visitors had gone to their respective homes, the earl lingered. It was something novel to him, this appointment with his own wife—something piquant. He waited for her in the drawing room, where the blinds were still undrawn, and through the windows of which a lovely moon was shedding floods of silvery light.

He sat down thoughtfully, looking at the sky; he could hear the faint click of the billiard balls; he knew that many a merry jest was passing in the smoking room. But in some vague fashion—he could hardly understand why — he felt tired of all such pastime. His wife's earnest face rose up before him; again he seemed to hear her pleading, passionate words. Her own expression haunted him—"a wasted life."

Was his life indeed wasted? Young, handsome, talented, did he live in vain? He sighed uneasily. He had led a very pleasant life. Getting through a large fortune had been a pleasant occupation. He had enjoyed his gaming, his betting, his racing, his indolence. But now something else was stirring within him. Could it be regret or remorse, or was it simply that he was tired and out of spirits?

Presently the door opened and his wife came in. She had removed the jewels from her hair and her breast. Her lovely face shone with a new light; her rich dress, her dark hair, made her a most attractive picture.

She went up to him.

"I have come to ask a favor of you," said the young countess—"a favor on which the whole of my life depends. In granting it you will make me happy; if you refuse it I shall be miserable."

"That shall not happen if I can prevent it," he answered.

His wife continued:

"My time hangs heavily on my hands. I have nothing to do—no occupation. O, Lord Caraven! be patient with me! I want to ask you for something that will give me interest — that will occupy me—that will stand to me in the place of happiness and love."

"I will help you to it, if I can," he replied.

She looked so fair, standing before him pleading her own cause. She drew a little nearer to him, as though her confidence in him were increasing.

"This is what I want you to do for me, Lord Caraven," she said. "I am not ignorant of such matters; you might sneer at me, and say my talent is hereditary; but you will not do that. I have some little experience, and I should improve day by day."

He looked at her half wondering, half amused.

"What is it, Hildred?" he asked. "I do not in the least understand."

"It is this. I want you to let me be your steward—I mean, let me have charge of your estate. I could do the duties far better than Mr. Blantyre."

"I give him a large salary," said Lord Caraven, half laughing; "he ought to do them well."

"But you have seen for yourself that he does not," she returned; "he is not a just steward."

"No," was the grave admission, "he is not just. It is that which grieves me. He has abused my trust. I shall never believe in him again."

"Then let me take his place," she cried, eagerly. "I do not mean in the mere keeping of accounts — you will always want some one for that —nor even in the looking after little details; but let me be your head steward, Lord Caraven, and the welfare of your tenants and dependents, the well-being of your estate, the care of your property, shall be my one interest in life. I will be content to work early and late, to live without pleasure, if you will only grant my prayer.

"But you are a lady, Hildred. How could you find time for it?"

In her eagerness she forgot her reserve — she laid her hand upon his arm, and looked into his face.

"I am not a fine lady; I am a lawyer's daughter. It may even be that I inherit my father's liking for business. I shall find time, believe me, if you will give your consent."

"What would you do, Hildred, supposing I give my consent?" he asked.

"Say rather what would I not do. I would reform all abuses. I would make Ravensmere a model estate—prople should point to it as a pattern. I would make your laborers men; they are now only soulless drudges. I would pull down those wretched cottages where squalor and disease run riot, and build in their places houses such as even the poor could love. I would educate the children. What a question it is you ask me! What would I not do?"

The earl rose from his chair; he bent his head w,th chivalrous grace before her.

"My wife," he said, "you shame me."

"No," she cried; "you must not say that to me."

"I repeat it — you shame me," he went on. "Yes, I give my consent—my free, full, hearty consent. You will make a better mistress of Ravensmere than I do a master. You shall be the queen-regent; I will be your prime minister. I place and leave all authority in your hands, and I promise you most faithfully that I will never interfere; you shall pull down and build up—you shall do just as you will—I will never interfere."

She was so overjoyed with his promises, with the change in his manner, with the earnestness on his face that she forgot all about her restraint and indifference, and she kissed the hand that held her own. She saw her husband's face flush crimson, and she drew back suddenly.

"I beg your pardon," she said; "I am very sorry. I did not think of what I was doing, I was so overjoyed."

He took no notice of the involuntary caress, nor of the apology, though both had struck him.

"I am glad that you are pleased, Hildred," he said. "In placing my interests in your hands I feel I have done to-day the wisest action of my life. We will send for Blantyre, and you shall confront him."

Then he smiled to himself, thinking that in these strange days it was impossible to understand anything, and that it was within the bounds of possibility that Hildred inherited her father's talents for business.

The earl rung for his footman.

"When Mr. Blantyre comes, show him into my study," he said; and then he went over to his wife. "You do not feel nervous at the task you have undertaken?" he questioned.

"No," she replied, calmly, "but I fancy that Mr. Blantyre will feel nervous before we have done with him."

The earl smiled. If this trusted servant of his had deceived him, the sooner he was unmasked and punished the better.

"I think," said Lady Caraven, "it would be quite as well if we looked over that balance sheet before Mr. Blantyre comes—it will shorten the interview."

He acquiesced at once, and followed his wife to the study. The aspect of that room was somewhat changed. The photographs, the love tokens that had displeased Lady Caraven, the portraits of popular actresses and of well-known danseuses, had all disappeared; the room looked more like a study, for the tables were covered with books and papers.

If the young countess felt any surprise at this changed aspect, she did not evince it, though she felt the compliment. She proved herself a wise woman by saying little; if she had uttered but one word too much, she might have imperiled all her hardly-won influence.

Gravely, proudly, without a word, she went to the table, and took her seat. Her husband stood at some little distance from her. Silently she bent her head over the papers.

"You have seldom, I suppose, looked over one of these balance sheets?" she said to the earl.

"No," he replied, "I do not remember that I have ever examined one."

"Then I will look over them," she said, quietly. Before long she added, "Will you look at this, Lord Caraven? All this is quite wrong—several entries are incorrect, and the reckoning is falsified."

The earl was slightly embarrassed.

"I do not think to tell you the truth, Hildred, that I am very clever at accounts," he stammered.

"But surely you can see whether this is correct? Believe me, a child could see it."

They were interrupted by the entrance of the agent himself— the man whom, from his face, Lady Caraven suspected from the first of being dishonest.

John Blantyre was a tall, gentlemanly looking man of specious manner and good address. A rogue from liking, as much as anything else, he would not have cared to be honest if he could. He had contrived to ingratiate himself into the favor of Lord Caraven, from the conviction that he could do as he liked with the easy, indolent, pleasure-loving nobleman. He had done so. He had pandered to all the young earl's weaknesses; to the cry of "Money, money," he had responded by wringing more and more from the tenants, by raising rents, refusing repairs, by all the mean and underhand tricks he could play. He answered the earl's purpose well, because he could, from some source or other, always find him money. The young nobleman was too careless, too indolent to stop to think that while he was thus impoverishing the estate the unjust steward was enriching himself. Balance sheets were brought to him that he never even glanced at; bankers' books, bills, receipts were passed over in similar fashion. He never troubled to look at any of them. The result was irretrievable confusion. John Blantyre had laid aside a fair fortune for himself.

The young countess' eyes were raised to the bland face of the agent; they seemed to burn him. The earl left the discussion to her, as he had said he would. Words could not have expressed the proud, cold contempt of her face as she spoke to him:

"You are well aware, Mr. Blantyre, that this balance sheet is worth nothing? The accounts are all falsified."

"I am not aware of anything of the kind, your ladyship. There may be a few mistakes—it was hurriedly made out. May I ask permission to ——"

"You may ask nothing, sir," she replied, curtly. "Tell Lord Caraven if it be correct that you have taken a bribe from some one who wants Bromhill Farm — a bribe to turn out the old tenants and bring in a new one."

"Lord Caraven knows that he—" But the countess interrupted him: "Did you take the bribe? 'Yes' or 'No?'"

"Yes," he replied, sullenly.

"Mr. Blantyre," said the young countess, "you are a detected thief. You have robbed your employer, you have falsified your accounts, you have ground down the poor, you have oppressed the helpless, you have made my husband's name hated and loathed, you have betrayed your trust, you have drawn down upon your own head the curses of those people whom ill-luck has brought you into contact with."

"Stay, my lady. You accuse me, and give me no chance to defend myself."

"You cannot defend yourself," she replied. "I hold innumerable proofs of what I assert."

John Blantyre cowered before the bright indignation of the fearless eyes, and, turning to the earl, said: "My lord, I have been a faithful servant of yours; have you nothing to say for me?"

"Upon my word, Blantyre, I believe you have been a most consummate rogue," answered the earl. "I have placed all my authority in the hands of Lady Caraven. She is to do as she will."

The bland smile on the agent's face changed to an ugly sneer. The young countess rose from her seat, and, extending her arm, pointed with her finger to the door. He made as though he would speak. She still kept her hand outstretched to the door; her eyes overmastered him. He turned to quit the room.

When he reached the door, rage overcame prudence. He looked back at the noble figure of the young wife.

"I thank you, Lady Caraven," he said. "I owe this to you."

She made no sign that she heard him.

"To you," he continued, with a sneer; "and we all know that you are here only on sufferance. Take care that your own turn does not come."

There was no answer. Not even a quiver of the white eyelids showed that she heard. His rage increased.

"Good-day, Countess of Caraven," he said. "You have called me a thief, you have, after a fashion, ruined me. I will be revenged— I swear it. Even should years pass before I can carry out my purpose, I will be revenged."

And with those words he quitted the study.

Long after he had left the room she stood wondering if John Blantyre would keep his oath, and if he did, what manner of vengeance he would take. Not even a dream of the terrible reality came to her.

(To Be Continued).

WHAT IT MIGHT BE.

One hot afternoon in July a traveler stopped at a farm house and asked for a drink. A country girl, bare footed and sun-bonneted, passed him out a dipper and said: "There's the well."

He was evidently inclined to indulge in a little rural flirtation, and after making all the known varieties of "sheep's eyes" at her over the edge of the dipper he made bold to inquire:

"What might your name be, miss?"

"Well," she said, in a matter-of-fact tone, "ef I can convince young Smiler that it's about time to come down to business, it might be Mrs. Mary Jane Smiler before next winter. At present it ain't nothing but Mary Jane Simpkins."

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

APPROPRIATE.

"His music reminds me of that phrase 'Sweetness long drawn out.'"

"Indeed?"

"Yes, he plays an accordion."

QUITE TRUE.

"Can't always have what you want in this world."

"No, but that doesn't prevent you from wanting what you haven't got."

FICKLE.

Tommy — "Lil Greenup, you told me last week you liked me better'n you did any other boy, and now you're lettin' Dick Trotter shine up to you!"

Lil—"I did like you best last week, but I've changed my mind. Does your papa keep a candy store?"

Tommy—"No."

Lil—"Well, Dick's papa does."

In the whole world there are about 8,000 yachts, of which the United Kingdom owns half.

The boa and python have the largest number of ribs of any animals, the number being 320 pairs.

Most of our swallows winter as far south as Sierra Leone. Swallows arrive in Natal in November and leave early in March.

Wasting Brain and Nerve Force

In Useless Fretting and Worry Brings on Nervous Diseases and Shortens Life—Dr. Chase's Nerve Food —The Greatest of Nerve Restoratives.

In this age of excessive competition men are wasting their nerve force and mental power at a tremendous rate. Overwork, excessive mental effort, robbing one's self of proper nourishment, rest and sleep, whipping up the tired and jaded faculties when they falter from sheer exhaustion—these are the causes of nervous prostration and collapse, of the weakness and helplessness which frequently affect mind and body.

Little wonder that men and women grow old before their time, and find their health capital wasted away. Little wonder that men find their efforts crowned with failure, and women fall victims to the ills that are peculiar to their sex. Little wonder that gloom and despondency tempt many to put an end to their burdened life.

Dr. Chase's Nerve food has brought hope and confidence to many a faltering, wornout man. It has cheered the heart of many a nerve-wrecked, suffering woman.

This food cure is different to any medicine you ever used. Most medicines tear down the tissues, but Dr. Chase's Nerve Food builds up new ones. Most medicines are weakening to the system, but Dr. Chase's Nerve Food adds strength with every dose.

If you read the testimonials which appear in the newspapers from day to day on behalf of this great system builder you can form some slight idea of the enormous good this preparation is doing to the weak and exhausted.

Put this treatment to the test by weighing yourself each week while using it, and you will be surprised with the results. By enriching the blood it forms new tissues, rounds out the angular form and permanently benefits the system.

Dr. Chase's Nerve Food, 50 cents a box, at all dealers, or Edmanson, Bates & Co., Toronto.

AFTER THREE YEARS.

MR. JOSEPH ROCHETTE RELEASED FROM RHEUMATISM.

Suffered Much Agony, His Appetite Failed, and His Strength Left Him—Hope for Similar Sufferers.

Only those who have suffered from the pangs of rheumatism know how much agony the sufferer has at times to endure. The symptoms often vary, but among them will be found acute pains in the muscles and joints, the latter sometimes much swollen. At times the patient is unable to dress himself, and the slightest jarring sound aggravates the pain. Liniments and outward applications cannot possibly cure rheumatism; it must be treated through the blood, and for this purpose there is no medicine yet discovered can equal Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. When given a fair trial, these pills never fail to cure even the most stubborn cases of rheumatism. Mr. Joseph Rochette, a well-known resident of St. Jerome, Que., in an interview with a reporter of L'Avenir du Nord, offers a strong proof of the value of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills in cases of this kind. Mr. Rochette says: "For nearly three years I was a great sufferer from rheumatism. The pains seemed at times to affect every joint, and the agony I endured was terrible. Sometimes I could scarcely move about, and was unfitted for work. The trouble affected my appetite, and in this way my weakness increased and my condition became more deplorable. I tried a number of remedies, but nothing helped me until I was advised to take Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and then relief came. Gradually the pains left me, my appetite improved and I became greatly strengthened. Before I had taken a dozen boxes my health and vigor was such that I felt better than I did before the trouble began. I have not since had an ache or pain, and I feel convinced that Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are the best medicine in the world for rheumatism."

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are sold in every civilized land, and their enormous sale is due entirely to their great merit as a medicine. They cure all such troubles as rheumatism, sciatica, locomotor ataxia, partial paralysis, nervous headache, kidney ailments, neuralgia and the weaknesses that afflict so many women. Do not let any dealer persuade you to try something else which he may say is "just as good." See that the full name "Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People" is on the wrapper around every box. If in doubt, send direct to The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont., and the pills will be mailed, post paid, at 50c per box, or six boxes for $2.50.

A NECESSARY QUALIFICATION

A school inspector in England asked a child in a primary school to tell him as nearly as possible what he understood a pilgrim to be.

"A pilgrim is a man who goes about a good deal," was the reply.

This seemed not quites atisfactory to the inspector, and he said, "I 'go about a good deal,' but I am not a pilgrim."

"Please, sir, I mean a good man," was the eager addition.

DID NOT WONDER THAT HE SHOT.

An old Scotch woman had imbibed so thoroughly the ancient doctrine that music in the church was sinful that when she came to this country she refused to fall in with the general sentiment in favor of choir singing.

One day in church the choir was singing a very elaborate anthem which was new to her. She scowled and turning to her neighbor, complained of the evil of modern ways which permit a newfangled piece of concert music in the sacred walls of a church.

"But," protested her neighbor, "that anthem is very old and very sacred. Why, David sang it before Saul!"

"Weel, weel," answered the old lady, "I un'erstand noo why Saul threw a javelin at David when the lad sang for him!"

MISERABLE NIGHTS,

What to Do When Baby Is Fretful and Sleepless.

It is wrong to take up a wakeful baby from the cradle and walk it up and down the floor all night. It demoralizes the infant and enslaves the parents. Baby does not cry for the fun of the thing; it cries because it is not well — generally because its stomach is sour, its little bowels congested, its skin hot and feverish. Relieve it and it will sleep all night every night growing stronger in proportion. Just what mothers need is told in a letter from Mrs. E. J. Flanders, Marbleton, Que., who says: "I cannot say too much in favor of Baby's Own Tablets. They have worked like a charm with my baby who was very restless at night, but Baby's Own Tablets soon brought quiet sleep and rest. I shall never be without a box while I have a baby." Baby's Own Tablets cure all minor ailments of little ones and are guaranteed to contain no opiate or harmful drug. They are sold at 25 cents a box by all dealers, or you can get them by mail post paid, by writing direct to the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont., or Schenectady, N. Y.