The Power of Persuasion

Or Lady Caraven's Labor of Love.

CHAPTER XVII.

The grand ball in honor of Lady Hamilton was to be given at Ravensmere on the last day of September. The summer weather still lingered; flowers that should have died before were still living, birds that should long since have sought a sunnier clime were still singing. On the evening of the ball a bright moon was shining in a clear sky, and the wind was sweet as in summer. There had been royal entertainments at Ravensmere, but none had ever been on a grander or more magnificent scale than this ball. All that flowers, lights, and superb decorations could effect was effected. There was tier after tier of brilliant bloom; the light of a thousand tapers made a brightness greater than that of day; tiny scented fountains rippled among the flowers. It was a magnificent spectacle; and of that magnificent fete there were two queens.

At the opening of the ball they stood for a few moments side by side; and then opinion varied as to which was the more beautiful. The Countess Caraven was a woman of stately loveliness, Lady Hamilton of fairy-like beauty.

The countess, who had some vague idea that this night would be the turning point in her destiny, had devoted much time and thought to her toilet. Her dress was of some shining material that resembled cloth of gold; the rounded arms were bare to the shoulder, the white neck and throat rising like a stately flower from its calyx. The golden hue of the dress enhanced the beauty of the dark eyes and hair; there was a slight flush on the splendid face, a deeper light in her dark eyes. She wore a suite of superb rubies; they lay in the coils of dark hair, and sparkled like points of flame on the white breast; as she moved, the light scintillated and gleamed in the rich dress and jewels.

By her side stood her rival and perfect contrast — fair, blonde Lady Hamilton — in a dress of pure white —white, with green leaves and flowers — and with flowers in her golden hair—the perfect ideal of a fair, graceful, lovely woman.

As they stood for a few minutes side by side, all eyes were upon them.

The ball was a marvelous success. Lord Damers, who had come to Ravensmere purposely for it, said that he had never seen anything like it. He went up to the earl, who, looking very handsome in his evening dress, was watching the dancers.

"Do you know, Caraven," he asked, "who is the handsomest woman here?"

The earl looked round with a smile.

"The decision does not require a minute's hesitation," said Lord Damers. "Look round and you will see that there is no one to compare with your own wife. She is by far the most beautiful woman I have ever seen in my life."

The earl looked up wonderingly.

"Is she? Do you know that I have never thought much of her appearance?"

"Then you have been blind. Look at her now."

Lord Caraven looked up. He saw a tall, beautiful figure and a magnificent face with dark, proud brilliant eyes and a lovely mouth, round which played a half grave, timorous smile. He seemed to be impressed.

"You are right," he said; "she is very beautiful."

"I should imagine so," returned Lord Damers, emphatically. "Why, by her side even the brilliant Lady Hamilton looks faded. Every one is talking about your wife; you do not know how many men envy you."

Lord Caraven laughed aloud. Perhaps if the world knew all, he told himself, there would be little cause for envy.

"She is beautiful," he repeated to himself. He had suddenly awoke to the knowledge of the fact. He said to himself that he must have been blind. Had this woman been any other than his wife he would have thought her perfection. As he looked at her he wondered that he had ever boasted of his preference for blondes. What could compare with the splendor of those dark eyes, the exquisite coloring of that noble Southern face? He must have been blind. He crossed the room to where the young countess stood talking to Lady Hamilton.

"Hildred," he said, simply, "will you save one dance for me?"

She looked at the pretty tablets, then smiled at him.

"I am not engaged for the next waltz," she said.

"Then give it to me," requested the earl; and the dark eyes were raised to his.

"If I had been engaged I should have felt inclined to break my engagement," she said.

Lady Hamilton was not quite pleased. Two suns could not shine in one hemisphere, and if Lady Caraven had any plea of outshining her, the sooner that idea was abandoned the better.

"It is rather odd," she said, with one of her brightest smiles, "to see husband and wife waltz together — one would imagine you were still lovers."

Hildred was on the point of retorting that they had never yet been that, but prudence restrained her.

"You will not forget your promise?" said the earl.

"For the waltz—no," she replied.

"Let me see you write my name," said the earl.

And Lady Caraven took up the pretty tablets again.

They held many names. Against the waltz she wrote: "My husband."

He was watching her intently, and when she had finished writing he took the tablets from her hand. How strange the words looked! There were noble names above them, noble names below them.

"My husband." He wondered why she had not written "Lord Caraven," or his initials. As he returned the tablets to her their eyes met in a long, lingering glance. Suddenly, she turned from him with her face on fire, and Lord Caraven, with a strange sensation at his heart, began talking to Lady Hamilton.

"This is my waltz," said Lord Caraven, shortly afterward, as he came up to his wife.

She did not raise her eyes to his —she was afraid to do so. What if they should tell him her secret? What if he should read love for himself shining in their depths?

The earl had smiled, half sighed at the piquant strangeness of the situation. This noble woman, to the knowledge of whose beauty he had suddenly awoke, was his own wife. They had spent much time together, both sung and worked together, yet he never remembered to have embraced her; now his arm was round the supple, graceful figure—the lovely face was close to his own. He saw before him the whole time, standing out clear and distinct from the others, the two words, "My husband."

Lord Damers had told him that he was a subject of envy. The past had all been a sorry mistake. How beautifully this neglected, unloved wife of his danced! It was the very poetry of motion. But—how strange it was! — she never looked at him; she did not talk or laugh; she seemed rather to avoid him, as it were.

"She does not like me," thought the earl; "and she has no little reason." He was frank enough to own that.

The dance ended, he led his wife to a seat, and then left her with a bow.

She was never quite the same again. As it needs but a small match to fire a train of gunpowder, so it needed but a little to awaken her love into keen, quick, passionate life. That one dance with him had done it. She loved him with her whole heart, and the suddenness with which that conviction flashed over her bewildered her. She sat quite still, the soft, sweet music, the ripple of the little fountain, the subdued murmur, all dazzling her eyes—and she said to herself:

"I love my husband."

The whole world seemed changed to her. Shyly, timidly she looked at him. He was talking to a group of ladies, his handsome face all animation, his tall, well-built figure all grace. He was a man to be proud of — a man to love. But he must never know about this love of hers—this newly-found, precious treasure. He despised her for her want of noble birth; she must keep her love as secret as the grave.

That increased the distance between them. She was so fearful that he should discover her secret, so fearful that he should think her unwomanly, so afraid that he should imagine she wanted his love, that she took refuge in cold, shy,iprous avoidance. There were no more rides or drives to see the buildings and the improvements; there was no more quiet letter writing in the library. When Lord Caraven wanted Hildred she had some gentle, ready excuse, and with a house full of visitors it was difficult to determine whether those excuses were genuine or not. But from the night of the ball everything was altered between them; Hildred was no longer the devoted, unselfish wife, who studied him and his interests above everything else—she was the proud, passionate, tender woman, who would rather have died than let him know that she loved him in spite of his neglect.

In consequence of this, the earl was thrown more and more into the society of Lady Hamilton. His wife declined to ride with him; Lady Hamilton assured him that she could live in the open air. His wife had no time to discuss his letters; Lady Hamilton assured him that there was nothing she liked better than overlooking another person's correspondence. His wife never asked him to sing; Lady Hamilton did so, and sat listening, and looking unutterable things. Lady Caraven's shyness was her opportunity. Not that she for a moment intended to make any mischief between husband and wife, or that she was in love with Lord Caraven; but she acted as she did simply because it was her practice to absorb the attention and engross the interest of every man who came within the sphere of her attractions. The deeper nature of the nobler woman did not recognize this. The young countess hid her love as she had hidden her jealousy; but it was hard to bear.

One trait more than any other convinced her that she was jealous of Lady Hamilton. She had until now been quite indifferent; all the world might know the terms on which she and her husband lived; she had not cared in the least. But now she grew morbidly anxious that this golden-haired beauty should never know them. She could not tell why, but she would fain have made Lady Hamilton believe that she was happy—that her husband loved her—that they were united and agreed as other husbands and wives. She tormented herself by wondering what Lady Hamilton would say if she knew the true state of the case; how the sunny blue eyes would gleam with laughter — how the fair face would flash with scorn! Lady Caraven said to herself that she would suffer death rather than permit the story of her unhappy married life to be known to her rival. Whenever she saw her husband talking to Lady Hamilton she wondered if she herself were the topic of conversation. Instinctively the two ladies were rivals — they hardly knew why — instinctively one developed a dislike of the other.

There was no one to warn the beautiful young countess that she was yielding to a terrible fault that would bring with it a terrible punishment. Sir Raoul was not well — the old wound pained him terribly—and there were days together when he could not leave his room; so that Hildred was left to the pain of her love and sorrow.

Anything than that her husband should find out her secret. How he would laugh at her! The money-lender's daughter to love the earl — the neglected wife to give her heart, all unasked, all unsought for, to her husband! She felt that she could not survive the sneer. He should not know it. He might think her capricious; he should think her anything but infatuated with himself. He said to her one morning, laughingly:

"Hildred, the days of our pleasant meetings seem to be passed."

She made him some evasive answer and quitted the room. He looked thoughtfully after her. What had come over his wife? Had she grown tired of her devotion to him, or was it that her time was fully occupied with visitors? It was not a matter of much moment to him; he did not spend much time in thinking about her; but her manner slightly puzzled him.

No one else saw anything strange in her. Sir Raoul, who would have read her thoughts like an open book, was not present. To the others Lady Caraven was simply a calm, well-bred, graceful hostess. No one guessed what a storm of anger and love, of jealousy and pain, warred under the calm exterior. The love would have been easy to bear if the jealousy had not been there to poison it.

There was no real cause for it. Lady Hamilton intended some day or other to make a grand coup—to marry one of the wealthiest and noblest of her admirers. She was not one of those who would consider the world well lost for love. As for falling in love with a married man, she would never have dreamed of such a thing — not merely because it was wrong, but from the simple fact that it was a waste of time. But the young countess did not think of these things. The fever increased in her veins — the fire in her heart. Her whole life became a dream of watching and pain.

He did not love her—he never would, she repeated over and over again. Could it be that he would love her fair-haired rival—the blonde beauty? If he did, what then? She was powerless to help herself. She said to herself:

"There is no hope now."

In her dreams it had occurred to her that she might win him in time. Now she felt that hope was ended. And the young Countess of Caraven —talented, clever, gifted with some of life's greatest gifts — cried out that her pain and her sorrow were more than she could bear.

Why had she learned to love him? All had been well until then—his neglect had not pained her, his want of love had not tortured her. She had not cared in the least who knew her story or who did not. Now all that had gone. With the sweet, subtle love that had entered her soul — she hardly knew how — had come a whole host of evils and sorrows.

It was hard to go about her daily tasks—to smile, to talk, to look as though no sorrow engrossed her—but Hildred did it. Her husband found out, too, quite by accident, that she rose early every morning in order that she might go on with the work she had begun. Her letters, the plans, the wants of the tenants, were all attended to before the real household day began. He was pleased when he found it out; it was part of her noble character to be true to her purposes; but he never dreamed that love for him drove sleep from her eyes, as it had already driven peace from her heart—he would never have believed it.

So they went on through the bright autumn days, playing at cross-purposes, each believing simply and implicitly in the dislike of the other. With the days her love grew greater. There was indeed something most loving in the earl now. While she shunned and avoided him, she would have given the whole world for one kindly word, for one loving glance from him. She watched him with dim, passionate eyes.

At the sound of his footsteps her heart throbbed, and her pulse quickened at the sound of his voice. Her whole heart went out to him. He was her husband, and she loved him with a wonderful love, although she showed none of it.

With her keen, passionate love grew her jealousy. It was not in Lady Hamilton's nature to pass by the admiration of a man like the handsome earl. He must admire her. Had he not done so spontaneously, she would have won it from him. All homage was acceptable to her — his particularly so, because he was a handsome man, and because he had a beautiful, dark-eyed wife, who never looked quite comfortable when they were talking together — two little incentives which Lady Hamilton profited by, and which afforded amusement to her. What to her was nothing but sheer mischief, sheer love of admiration, was death almost to the proud young wife, who counted every smile that her husband gave to her.

She smiled sadly to herself one day, saying:

"Now I know the meaning of the words, 'I have gone mad — I love him — let me die!' "

(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

KIDNEY TROUBLE.

A DISEASE THAT OFTEN TERMINATES FATALLY.

Mr. L. Lussier, of Sorel, Tells How He Overcame the Trouble After Repeated Failures.

There is no trouble more dangerous to life than disease of the kidneys, for the reason that before any special symptoms have made themselves manifest, the disease has usually assumed a formidable character. The symptoms that first manifest themselves are usually weakness in the small of the back, pains in the region of the loins. The urine is some times highly colored, while in other cases it is extremely pale, frequently depositing a sediment. As the trouble progresses these symptoms grow more severe, and frequently terminate in dropsy, Bright's disease or diabetes. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are a specific for all kidney troubles, and have cured many cases after all other medicines have failed. Mr. L. Lussier, a well known navigator of Sorel, Que., gives his experience for the benefit of other sufferers. He says :—"For several years I suffered very much from kidney trouble. The symptoms usually made themselves manifest by severe pains in the back and kidneys, and sometimes they would be so bad that I would be confined to my bed for several days at a time. I tried a number of different medicines, recommended for the trouble, but got no relief, and finally became so discouraged that I thought a cure was impossible, and stopped taking medicine. Shortly after this I read in our local paper of a case of kidney trouble cured by the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and this induced me to try this medicine. I soon felt that these pills were not like the other medicines I had been taking, for in the course of a few weeks I began to experience great relief. I continued taking the pills for a couple of months, by which time all symptoms of the trouble had disappeared, and I have not since had the slightest return of the disease. These pills also strengthened me in other ways and I believe them to be the best of all medicines."

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills enrich and nourish the blood and strengthen the nerves. It is thus that they cure such troubles as dyspepsia, kidney ailments, rheumatism, partial paralysis, heart troubles, St. Vitus' dance and the ailments that make the lives of so many women a source of misery. Do not take any pills without the full name, "Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People," on the wrapper around the box. Sold by all medicine dealers or sent post paid at 50 cents a box or six boxes for $2.50 by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

BEACONSFIELD'S BREECHES.

We may conclude from an anecdote in Sir Edward Hertslet's "Recollections of the Old Foreign Office" that it is a wise valet that knows all his master's clothes by sight.

Lord Beaconsfield was one of the Elder Brethren of the Trinity House, and as such owned a special official uniform. One day he was about to attend a levee at St. James's Palace, and his valet laid out his clothes for the occasion.

Having implicit confidence in his valet, Beaconsfield dressed and went to the levee. On appearing before the prince — now Edward VII.—the diplomatist and minister made his bow and, to his surprise, was greeted with an amused smile.

"It won't do," his royal highness jocularly remarked. "You're found out!"

"In what, sir?" demanded Beaconsfield.

"Oh," said the prince, still smiling, "you've got the wrong trousers on!"

And, to his horror, on looking down, Beaconsfield found that he had got his diplomatic uniform coat on with his Trinity House trousers —a sartorial sin which included omission and commission.

CANNED GOODS HEALTHY.

Professor Lehmann, of Wurzburg, Germany, has finished his examination concerning the healthiness, or unhealthiness, of foodstuffs canned in tin. His examination lasted two years and is the most exhaustive ever undertaken. He said to your correspondent :—"Vegetables, meats, and certain kinds of fruit may be canned in tin without the least detriment to the health of the consumer. If people eating canned goods are poisoned, the goods are to blame, not the tin. At the same time it should be prohibited by law to can vegetables and fruits containing any degree of sourness. Vinegar, or wine, acid contained in tin becomes dangerous. Fruits, meats, and vegetables containing same should be put up in glass, porcelain, or wood."

QUITE NATURAL.

"Do you think the photographer flattered her?"

"I suppose so. Everyone does."

Lawson — "Jackson tells me that he is pretty well known in your town." Dawson — "I should say he was. Why, there isn't a man in the place that would lend him half a crown."

A gentleman who had been traveling in France related that in Paris the barber who was shaving him stepped two or three times upon the side of his foot. At last the customer called out: "Please don't do that any more! I have a corn." "Exactly what I was trying to find out, monsieur," said the barber, blandly. "We have an excellent preparation for removing corns, for sale at one franc per bottle."

Proud Papa (playfully) — "Whose little boy are you?" Little Johnny (seriously) — "I'm your little boy, but I has been washed."

Many Children Out of School

With Coughs and Colds, and Parents Everywhere are Proving the Wonderful Curative Powers of Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine.

When grown people neglect their ailments and allow them to develop into serious diseases, they have no one to blame but themselves.

With children it is different, because they do not realize the seriousness of a neglected cold nor the means of obtaining cure, and many a child, as he grows older and finds himself a victim of pneumonia, consumption, bronchitis, asthma or throat trouble, cannot but see that his parents were responsible for neglecting treatment when his ailment began in the form of a cold.

To-day the schools have many a vacant seat on account of coughs and colds, and many children who are there should be at home. What treatment are these children getting? Do their parents realize the seriousness of neglecting to cure a cold? Have they proved the merits of Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine as a cure for coughs and colds, bronchitis, croup, whooping cough, and all kindred ills?

Very many have, for there is no preparation for throat and lung diseases that has anything like the sale of Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine.

Be careful when you buy to see that the portrait and signature of Dr. Chase is on the wrapper. If you send the children to the store, warn them not to accept any imitation or substitution. Children like to take Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine, and there is no remedy so prompt and effective. 25 cents a bottle; family size, three times as much, 60 cents; at all dealers, or Edmanson, Bates & Co., Toronto.