The Power of Persuasion

Or Lady Caraven's Labor of Love.

CHAPTER XVIII.

With an intolerable sense of shame and disgrace, it suddenly occurred to Lady Caraven that her lot in life was quite different from other people's. It seemed to pass over her with a sudden, terrible commotion. She had been so occupied before with her efforts as regarded her husband, her plans of reform, her schemes for the benefit of others, that she had not given much thought to her own position as a wife whose husband made no pretense of loving her. The knowledge of her real status came to her now with a keen sense of intolerable pain, yet she would have borne its bitters but for the fear lest the brilliant, beautiful blonde should become as wise as herself. That would have been intolerable.

What she suffered from the fear of her rival discovering her secret none but a sensitive, tender-hearted, neglected woman could understand; all the world might know rather than the blue-eyed coquette, who would smile and say to herself: "His wife is not beautiful enough to charm him." That would be intolerable to her. Whenever she saw her husband talking seriously to Lady Hamilton, she imagined that he was telling the story of his unhappy marriage. She watched him incessantly; if he went anywhere with Lady Hamilton, she not only contrived to be of the party, but also to be near them. She watched their faces anxiously, to find out from the expression if it were of her they were speaking. Under the pain of this silent brooding jealousy, the beautiful face grew pale, the dark eyes seemed to lose their light and brightness.

He might not love her, but he should not love any one else. He should not laugh because she was jealous, he should not admire this fair woman while he so cruelly neglected her. She worked herself into a frenzy of jealous despair, yet was outwardly calm and proud as usual.

The dinner party at the castle that day was not a large one; many of the guests had left, Lord and Lady Damers had returned home. Lady Caraven had dressed herself with unusual care and attention. She wore a beautiful dress of amber satin and black lace which suited her dark brunette loveliness. She wore her favorite suit of rubies — rubies that had in them a light like deepest flame. A grandly beautiful woman she looked as she took her seat at the dinner table.

During dinner she watched her husband and Lady Hamilton. More than once she saw them laughing and heard them talking merrily. Was it of her? Was the earl telling her that his wife was jealous? And was she laughing because the very cream of the jest was that her husband did not care for her?

Then she grew ashamed of herself. Such suspicions were unworthy of her. She tried to banish them, but they were too strong for her. Whenever the golden hair stirred, whenever the sweet sound of musical laughter came to her, she fancied that she was the subject of the jest, until her jealous pain grew intolerable and she could bear it no longer. It was a relief to her when she could give the signal and the ladies could withdraw. She wanted to be alone to think.

For the convenience of one of the guests who was leaving they had dined a little earlier than usual. When the ladies reached the drawing-room, the room was filled with ruddy light from the sun setting in the western sky. It would be cruel, they said, to spend such a warm, lovely evening indoors. The gentlemen, thinking the same thing, had hurried from their wine, saying that it would be a pity to lose the last gleam of sunlight.

"Let us gather the roses while we may," sang Lord Caraven, in his rich, ringing tenor.

But before they went out some one prayed the earl to sing one song.

"I will sing a duet," he said, "if Lady Hamilton will help me."

It was useless, he thought, appealing to his wife. The last time he had asked her to sing with him she had refused.

Lady Hamilton was only too pleased. She went to the piano, and very soon the two beautiful voices seemed to fill the room — Lady Hamilton's clear and sweet, the earl's rich and musical — while the young countess watched them with longing pitiful eyes. They were singing about love, love that would never die, love that was immortal. More than once the unhappy young wife saw the widow look at her husband; more than once there came to her a wild impulse, a longing to strike the fair face. When the song was over, it was time to go and watch the sunset. Hildred saw that her husband did not leave Lady Hamilton's side. He remained near her saying:

"We will watch the sunset over the lake. It is one of the prettiest sights of Ravensmere."

She did not hear Lady Hamilton's answer; it was given with smiling lips and laughing eyes. Was it her morbid fancy, or did she really hear her husband say, "Yes, and I will tell you the story of my marriage?"

She did not wait to ask herself if it were mere fancy. She believed that she had heard it, and the idea of it drove her almost mad. They were going to watch the sun fade among the flowers, and the earl would meanwhile entertain his companion with the story of his marriage — how he had to wed the money-lender's daughter, or else lose Ravensmere, but how he had avenged himself by neglecting her. Hildred's heart and brain were on fire. The husband she loved despite his neglect and the rival whom she had disliked were going to laugh over her together.

An idea suddenly occurred to the unhappy wife — they should not do this, they should not laugh at her; her love and her jealousy should not be sport for them. She would follow them unperceived, and then, when they began to laugh over her story, she would confront them, and dare them to amuse themselves with her anguish. All the pride of her nature was aroused. She would suffer death rather than be laughed at by her husband and her rival.

She was bewildered — not herself. She had never been herself from the moment in which she recognized the fact that she loved her husband with all the strength and passion of her nature. She was bewildered by the pain of her love and the smart of her jealousy. The only idea quite clear to her mind was that her husband and his guest should not laugh at her.

When the idea of going out had first been mentioned, she had sent for a scarf, and it lay upon a couch now, a glittering mass of silvery gauze. She saw her husband take it up.

"Whose is this?" he asked; and no one answered. "It is very pretty," he added; "and, if it has no owner, you shall have it, Lady Hamilton."

The young countess did not step forward to claim it; she saw her husband throw it over the pearly shoulders and the white neck, and Lady Hamilton look up at him with a coquettish laugh.

"Evidently," she said, "you are quite ignorant of the fashion in which ladies now wear scarfs. Our great grandmothers drew them tightly stretched across the shoulders — we like them in this fashion."

Raising her arm, she wound the silvery gauze round her head and neck and arms, shading the bright face, and making her look so piquantly beautiful that Lord Caraven cried out in admiration.

"That is capital," he said — "ladies always know what is picturesque."

The young countess saw them quit the room together. She resolved upon following them. She heard her husband say, laughingly, to his companion:

"We will go straight to the lake —I want you to watch the sunset there."

Lady Caraven delayed only a few moments — it was to go to her room for a large dark shawl that should hide her — hide the amber satin and rich black lace — hide her face and head, so that any one meeting her should quite fail to recognize her. "Creeping along in the dark, who will know me? Or, if they know me, who will care for me?" she said to herself.

When she reached her room she found a message there from Sir Raoul, asking if she would go to his apartments for a short time. She said to herself, "No;" with her heart and soul in a ferment, she could not talk to Sir Raoul. She had a dim idea that what she was about to do was wrong, undignified, ungenerous. She could not have persevered in her purpose had she looked but once in the calm noble face of the man who wanted her to be a heroine.

"Tell Sir Raoul that I am engaged just at present, but that I will see him later on in the evening," she said.

She sent him some books and flowers — she did not go to him.

"Later on in the evening."

She had said the words quite thoughtlessly; they returned to her afterward with keen pain. She was wreckless as to what followed, as to whether her husband would be angry or not she was indifferent. The only thing was that she had resolved upon preventing her husband and her rival from jesting about her; that should never be.

She went round by the postern door, and in the distance she caught a glimpse of the white dress and the silver veil. It was a most peculiar night. At any other time she would have been lost in wonder and delight — now she took no heed. The earth seemed to be growing dark while the light lingered in the sky; masses of crimson clouds edged with purple and gold appeared to be making a bed for the sun to lie on; the roseate light seemed to linger; among the trees and flowers silence reigned unbroken; in the far distance the waters of the lake shone like crimson and gold. It was one of those nights when the darkness seems to come on in a few minutes—when it descends swiftly and suddenly, as though the sky were falling and covering the earth. There was such deep silence among the trees as she went gently along that it seemed to Hildred's excited fancy as though this were a mystical night holding secrets and strange meaning.

To think that her husband did not recognize that silver veil as hers! She had worn it ever since she had been at Ravensmere; there was not a servant about the place who would not have recognized it in a minute; whereas her husband did not even know to whom it belonged.

"That proves what little notice he has bestowed on me," she thought bitterly.

The grounds of Ravensmere were so well wooded that behind the safe shelter of the tall trees she could walk quite unseen by the earl and his companion. The sweet southern wind that scarcely stirred the leaves brought to her from time to time chance words, but none of them were of her. She did not want to listen to their conversation; she only wished to prevent the story of her marriage from being told. Sometimes the low, musical laughter of Lady Hamilton reached her, and then the rich ring of her husband's voice would sound cheerily in the gathering gloom; and all the time she, his wife, was slowly treading her way after him, like the shadow of fate.

There had not been one word of her yet — the conversation had all been about people they had known years before; and now they stood on the borders of the lake, where the crimson waters, to the dazed mind of the young countess, looked like blood. She shuddered as the idea occurred to her. Some of the crimson glow fell on the white dress and on the silken veil. She saw Lady Hamilton hold out her little white hand, and cry, gleefully:

"Look, Lord Caraven — my hand is dyed red!"

"They had not spoken of her. The red sun was fast descending.

"This is what I wish you to see," said the earl. "The moment in which the sun seems to touch the water, a red gleam passes through it, then the next moment it is quite dark."

They watched in silence, while the dark figure stood motionless and still behind them. The sun, as it set, seemed to touch the outer edge of the lake; a red gleam came over it, beautiful and curious, and then almost at once, it was dark.

"We will go home by the coppice," said Lord Caraven; and his wife remembered that the long avenue of trees extended to the very gate. She could walk almost side by side with them, yet quite unseen.

They had not mentioned her name. Could she have been wrong in her suspicion? Had she mistaken her husband's words?

They were standing at the edge of the lake—a cold, dark sheet of water now—and she established herself behind a group of alder-trees. It seemed to her that the silver veil on the fair woman's head and shoulders absorbed all the light there was. Presently she drew near. Another group of trees separated her from the two who were so unconscious of her presence — large trees with swaying branches; through them the night wind brought every word to her. They talked only of the light on the water, and the sudden darkness there — of some one who had known and loved Lady Hamilton before her marriage. She laughed coquettishly over it.

How long was that nonsense to last, the unhappy young wife asked herself. How long was she to stand under the darkening evening skies, with the great alder-branches swaying to and fro, the soughing of the wind in her ears, the fire of love, the madness of jealousy raging in her heart — how long? It was almost unbearable. She felt inclined to cry out that it must end. She clinched her fingers, she bit her lip; then suddenly she heard the sound of her name — her maiden name — "Hildred Ransome!" What were they saying? Was the earl telling her how he had been compelled to encumber himself with a wife he did not love? Was he saying that, although he did not love her and they were strangers to each other, she cared for him? Was he laughing because she had owned that she was jealous of him?

"I cannot bear it!" she thought.

The next moment there was the sound of a shot—something seemed to rattle through the alder-branches —there was a low cry, a startled exclamation.

"There are poachers in the wood," she thought; "he will go in search of them, and then he will find me!"

She turned to fly; now that there was the danger of being caught she seemed to wake to a full consciousness of what she was doing, the bare fact that she was listening seemed to come to her as it had never done before. She turned to fly; not for anything that could be given would she be caught there. She wanted to hasten, but she could not; it was as though great weights of lead were fastened to her feet. Her brain was dizzy; the unusual excitement, the frenzy of love and jealousy, had been too much for her; her tall, graceful figure swayed for a minute like a leaf in the wind, a low moan came from her lips, and then, as in a dream, the white, angry face of her husband was looking into hers and he grasped her arm in a hard, cruel grasp.

(To Be Continued).

DR. A. W. CHASE'S CATARRH CURE ... 25c.

is sent direct to the diseased parts by the Improved Blower. Heals the ulcers, clears the air passages, stops droppings in the throat and permanantly cures Catarrh and Hay Fever. Blower free. All dealers, or Dr. A. W. Chase Medicine Co., Toronto and Buffalo.

HOW IT SOUNDS.

Many persons who ought to know better persist in mispronouncing some of the commonest words in the language. A schoolboy explained his tardiness one morning by saying that his father was away from home, and had sent him a telegraphic despatch to let him know that he would be a day or two late in returning, as he had accepted an invitation to take part in a patriotic celebration. The boy had stopped to read the telegram.

The explanation sounded a trifle "fishy" to the teacher. "What is the progr'm of the celebration, Tommy?" she asked.

"I don't know, ma'am," he replied. "Papa didn't say in his telegr'm."

There was a twinkle in the boy's eye, but his face was preternaturally grave, and after eyeing him a moment suspiciously, the teacher sent him to his seat. Later on she looked in her dictionary.

A TOO COMMON ATTITUDE.

A small girl who has just begun to attend school recently brought home a pumpkin-seed, and told her mother that the teacher said that although the seed was white the pumpkin would be yellow.

"And what will the color of the vines be?" asked the mother.

The little girl replied that the teacher had not taught her that.

"But," said her mother, "you know, dear, for we have pumpkin vines in our garden."

"Of course I do, but we ain't expected to know anything until we are taught."

STOUT IN DEFENCE.

Sidney — "Have you any marked ability of any kind?"

Rodney — "Well, I've kept a lot of widows from marrying me."

"I have only the most distant relatives." "Has the family died out?" "No; they have all become rich."

Rid the System of Poisons

And You Need Have No Fear of Appendicitis, Peritonitis and Other Dreaded Ills.—Dr. Chase's Kidney Liver Pills, the Great Family Medicine.

When the bowels are constipated or sluggish in action the human body seems an easy prey to nearly every ailment to which human beings are subject.

The immediate result of inactivity of the bowels is the clogging and obstruction of the action of the kidneys and liver, the upsetting of the digestive organs and the forcing back into the system of poisonous impurities which contain the germs of disease.

Not only are colds and all contagious and infectious diseases more likely to attack a person subjected to constipation, but appendicitis, peritonitis, inflammation of the bowels and chronic dyspepsia are the direct result of neglecting to keep the bowels regular and active.

In health the bowels should move about once a day, otherwise, the effects are soon felt in the way of indigestion, headache, dizziness, bodily pains and feelings of uneasiness, languor and depression. The most prompt relief as well as the most thorough cure for constipation is Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills.

No merely cathartic medicine can do more than relieve constipation. The bile which is poured into the intestines by the liver is nature's cathartic and consequently healthy liver action is essential to regularity of the bowels. Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills have a direct action on the liver and kidneys as well as the bowels, and for this reason effect a thorough cure of constipation.

Dr. Chase's Kidney-Liver Pills are of inestimable value as a family medicine. One pill a dose, 25 cents a box. At all dealers or Edmanson, Bates & Co., Toronto.

MRS. YOUNG'S CASE.

A STRANGE CASE THAT BAFFLED DOCTORS.

None of Her Friends Believed She Could Recover and Her Case Has Excited Great Interest.

From the Courier, Trenton, Ont.

The case of Mrs. Robert Young, of Stanley street, Trenton, is one that has caused a great deal of talk among those who are acquainted with her. Mrs. Young is now in her seventy-eighth year, and is quite vigorous for a woman of that age. Three years ago she took a chill which appeared to affect her whole system. Her lower limbs and body swelled to such an extent that she could scarcely move them. Her stomach became so disordered that she could not take solid food, and her heart fluttered so violently that she could not lie in bed, and for two years had to be bolstered up day and night. The chills which were apparently the original cause of the trouble, became chronic, and affected her two or three times a week, and after a chill her skin would turn a dark brown color. Her friends did not believe she could recover, but nevertheless did all they could for her. Three doctors tried their skill, but to no purpose, and the strongest consolation they could offer was "Well, you know we are all growing old." Several advertised medicines were then given her, but with no better results. In August, 1901, Mrs. Young had become so bad that her daughter-in-law had to come from a distance to nurse her. She brought with her some Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and persuaded the old lady to begin their use. In the course of a few weeks there could be no doubt that they were helping her, and the doctor advised continuing their use, and now, after using them for some months, the swelling that had affected her limbs is gone; the chills no longer bother her; her stomach is restored to its normal condition, and the heart fluttering that had made it necessary to bolster her up in bed has also disappeared. It is no wonder that the case has excited much comment, and the editor of the Courier, who has personally investigated it, can vouch for the facts related above. Such marvellous cures as this prove Dr. Williams' Pink Pills to be the best medicine offered the public to-day and all those who are ailing should promptly give them a trial. All druggists sell these pills, or they can be obtained by mail at 50c. a box, or six boxes for $2.50, by writing direct to the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

WHAT HE STOOD ON.

When Mr. Disraeli made his entry into public life he contested High Wycombe, and then, as ever, his ready wit helped him to success.

His opponent was a county man of influence. In an address to the people this man asserted that he was "standing for the seat upon the constitution of the country, upon the broad acres of his fathers, upon law property and order."

"What does Mr. Disraeli stand upon?" demanded one of the county magnate's adherents, with something of a sneer.

Disraeli instantly rose. "I stand upon my head," he answered, with a meaning glance at the portly person of his opponent. He proceeded to demonstrate it in a telling speech.

LESSENING APPRECIATION.

Mrs. Newlywed — "Oh, mother John said this morning I was one woman in a hundred."

Her Mother — "I see in that no cause for tears."

Mrs. Newlywed — "But, mother, he used to say I was one woman in a thousand!"

WISE WILLIE.

His Mamma (who has just caught him smoking) — "I don't want you to ever let me catch you smoking again."

Willie—"You wouldn't have caught me dis time if you hadn't come in th' room so quick."

MOTHERLY ADVICE.

To Mothers Who Have Cross or Sickly Babies.

Cross or crying babies are either sick or in pain, and make everyone in the house miserable. Healthy babies are always happy babies, and all little ones can be kept both healthy and happy by the occasional use of Baby's Own Tablets. If your little one is cross, give him a Tablet and see how quickly it will work a change for the better. Mrs. W. H. Austin, Farmington, N.S., says —"Baby's Own Tablets are just what every mother needs when her little ones are cutting their teeth. When my little one cries, I give him a Tablet, and it helps him at once. Mothers who use the Tablets will have no trouble with their babies." These Tablets are sold under a positive guarantee to contain neither opiate nor any poisonous drug, and they will promptly cure all the minor ailments of little ones. Sold by druggists or sent by mail post paid, at 25 cents a box, by writing direct to the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont., or Schenectady, N.Y.