

A WOLF IN THE FOLD.

A DOMESTIC STORY WITH A MORAL.

CHAPTER IV.—DOMESTIC BLISS.

Holcroft had been given a foretaste of the phase of torment which he was destined to endure in his domestic relations, and was planning to secure a refuge into which he could not be pursued. He had made himself a little more presentable for supper, instinctively aware that nothing would escape the lynx-eyed widow, and was taking some measurements from the floor to a stove-pipe hole leading into the chimney flue, when he became aware that some one was in the doorway. Turning, he saw Jane with her small, cat-like eyes fixed intently upon him. Instantly he had the feeling that he was being watched and would be watched.

"Supper's ready," said the girl, disappearing.

Mrs. Mumpson smiled upon him—if certain contortions of his thin, sharp face could be termed a smile—from that side of the table at which his wife had sat so many years, and he saw that the low rocking-chair which he had preserved jealously from his former "help" had been brought from the parlor and established in the old familiar place. Mrs. Mumpson folded her hands and assumed a look of deep solemnity; Jane, as instructed, also lowered her head, and they waited for him to say "grace." He was in far too bitter a mood for any such pious farce, and stolidly began to help them to the ham and eggs, which viands had been as nearly spoiled as was possible in their preparation. The widow raised her head with a profound sigh which set Holcroft's teeth on edge, but he proceeded silently with his supper. The biscuits were heavy enough to burden the slightest conscience; and the coffee, simply grounds swimming around in lukewarm water. He took a sip, then put down his cup and said, quietly, "Guess I'll take a glass of milk to-night. Mrs. Mumpson, if you don't know how to make coffee, I can soon show you."

"Why! isn't it right? How strange! Perhaps it would be well for you to show me just exactly how you like it, for it will afford me much pleasure to make it to your taste. Men's tastes differ so! I've heard that no two men's tastes were alike; and, after all, everything is a matter of taste. Now cousin Abram doesn't believe in coffee at all. He thinks it is unwholesome. Have you ever thought that it might be unwholesome?"

"I'm used to it, and would like it good when I have it at all."

"Why, of course, of course, you must have it exactly to your taste.—Jane, my dear, we must put our minds on coffee and learn precisely how Mr. Holcroft likes it, and when the hired girl comes we must carefully superintend her when she makes it.—By the way, I suppose you will employ my assistant to-morrow, Mr. Holcroft?"

"I can't get a girl short of town," was the reply, "there is so much cream in the dairy that ought to be churned at once that I'll wait till next Monday and take down the butter."

Mrs. Mumpson put on a grave, injured air, and said, "Well," so disapprovingly that it was virtually saying that it was not well at all. Then, suddenly remembering that this was not good policy, she was soon all smiles and chatter again. "How cosy this is!" she cried, "and how soon one acquires the home feeling! Why, any one looking in at the window would think that we were an old established family, and yet this is but our first meal together. But it won't be the last, Mr. Holcroft. I cannot make it known to you how your loneliness, which cousin Lemu I has so feelingly described to me, has affected my feelings. Cousin Nancy said but this very day that you have had desperate times with all kinds of dreadful creatures. But all that's past. Jane and me will give a look of stability and respectability to every comer."

"Well, really, Mrs. Mumpson, I don't know who's to come."

"Oh, you'll see," she replied, wrinkling her thin, blue lips into what she meant for a smile, and nodding her head at him encouragingly. "You won't be so isolated no more. Now that I'm here, with my offspring, your neighbors will feel that they can show you their sympathy. The most respectable people in town will call, and your life will grow brighter and brighter; clouds will roll away, and—"

"I hope the neighbors will not be so ill-mannered as to come without being invited," remarked Mr. Holcroft, grimly. "It's too late in the day for them to begin now."

"My being here with Jane will make all the difference in the world," resumed Mrs. Mumpson, with as saccharine an expression as she could assume. "They will come out of pure kindness and friendly interest with the wish to encourage—"

"Mrs. Mumpson," said Holcroft, half desperately, "if any one comes it'll be out of pure curiosity, and I don't want such company. Selling enough butter, eggs and produce to pay expenses will encourage me more than all the people of Oakville if they should come in a body. What's the use of talking in this way? I've done without the neighbors so far, and I'm sure they've been very careful to do without me. I shall have nothing to do with them except in the way of business, and as I said to you down at Lemuel Weeks's, business must be the first consideration with us all," and he rose from the table.

"Oh, certainly, certainly," the widow hastened to say, "but then business is like a cloud, and the meetings and greetings of friends is a sort of silver lining, you know. What would the world be without friends—the society of those who take an abiding interest? Believe me, Mr. Holcroft," she continued, bringing her long, skinny finger impressively down on the table, "you have lived alone so long that you are unable to see the crying needs of your own constitution. As a Christian man, you require human sympathy and—"

Poor Holcroft knew little of centrifugal force; but at that moment he was a living embodiment of it, feeling that if he did not escape he would fly into a thousand atoms. Saying nervously, "I've a few chores to do," he seized his hat, and hastening out, wandered discontentedly around the barn. "I'm never going to be able to stand her," he groaned. "I know now why my poor wife shook her head whenever this woman was mentioned. The clack of her tongue would drive any man living crazy, and the gimlet eyes of that girl Jane would bore holes

through a saint's patience. Well, well, I'll put a stove up in my room, then ploughing and planting time will soon be here, and I guess I can stand it at meal times for three months, for unless she stops her foolishness she sha'n't stay any longer."

Jane had not spoken during the meal, but kept her eyes on Holcroft, except when he looked towards her, and then she instantly averted her gaze. When she was alone with her mother, she said abruptly, "We ain't a goin' to stay here long, nuther."

"Why not?" was the sharp, responsive query.

"'Cause the same look's comin' into his face that was in cousin Lemuel's and cousin Abram's and all the rest of 'em. 'Fis you I'd keep still' now. 'Pears to me they all want you to keep still and you won't."

"Jane," said Mrs. Mumpson, in severe tones, "you're an ignorant child. Don't presume to instruct me! Besides, this case is entirely different. Mr. Holcroft must be made to understand from the start that I'm not a common woman—that I'm his equal, and in most respects his superior. If he ain't made to feel this, it'll never enter his head—but law! there's things which you can't and oughtn't to understand."

"But I do," said the girl, shortly, "and he won't marry you, nor keep you if you talk him to death."

"Jane!" gasped Mrs. Mumpson, as she sank into the chair and rocked violently.

The night air was keen and soon drove Holcroft into the house. As he passed the kitchen window, he saw that Mrs. Mumpson was in his wife's rocking chair and that Jane was clearing up the table. He kindled a fire on the parlor hearth, hoping, but scarcely expecting, that he would be left alone.

Nor was he very long, for the widow soon opened the door and entered, carrying the chair. "Oh, you are here," she said, sweetly. "I heard the fire crackling, and I do so love open, wood fires. They're company in themselves, and they make those who bask in the flickering blaze inclined to be sociable. To think of how many long lonely evenings you have sat here when you had persons in your employ with whom you could have no affinity whatever! I don't know how you stood it. Under such circumstances life must cloud up into a dreary burden." It never occurred to Mrs. Mumpson that her figures of speech were often mixed. She merely felt that the sentimental phase of conversation must be very flowery. But during the first evening she had resolved on prudence. "Mr. Holcroft shall have time," she thought, "for the hope to steal into his heart that his housekeeper may become something more to him than housekeeper—that there is a nearer and loftier relation."

Meanwhile she was consumed with curiosity to know something about the "persons" previously employed and his experiences with them. With a momentary, and, as she felt, a proper pause before descending to ordinary topics, she resumed, "My dear Mr. Holcroft, no doubt it will be a relief to you—overfraught mind to pour into a sympathetic ear the story of your troubles with those—er—those peculiar females that—er—"

"Mrs. Mumpson, it would be a much greater relief to my mind to forget all about 'em," he replied, briefly.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the widow. "Was that as bad as that? Who'd a thought it! Well, well, well, what people there is in the world! And you couldn't abide 'em then?"

"No, I couldn't."

"Well now, what hussies they must have been! And to think you were here all alone with no better company! It makes my heart bleed. They do say that Bridget Malony is equal to anything, and I've no doubt but that she took things and did things."

"Well, she's taken herself off, and that's enough." Then he groaned inwardly, "Good Lord! I could stand her and all her tribe better'n this one."

"Yes, Mr. Holcroft," pursued Mrs. Mumpson, sinking her voice to a loud confidential whisper, "and I don't believe you've any idea how much she took with her. I fear you've been robbed in all these vicissitudes. Men never know what's in a house. They need caretakers, respectable women, that would sooner cut out their tongues than purloin. How happy is the change which has been affected! How could you abide in the house with such a person as that Bridget Malony?"

"Well, well, Mrs. Mumpson, she abode with herself. I at least had this room in peace and quietness."

"Of course, of course. A person so utterly unrespectable would not think of entering this apartment; but then you had to meet her, you know. You could not act as if she was not, when she was, and there being so much of her, too. She was a monstrous looking person. It's dreadful to think that such persons belong to our sex. I don't wonder you feel as you do about it all. I can understand you perfectly. All your sensibility was offended. You felt that your very home had become sacrilegious. Well, now, I suppose she said awful things to you?"

Holcroft could not endure this style of inquisition and comment another second longer. He rose and said, "Mrs. Mumpson, if you want to know just what she said and did you must go and ask her. I'm very tired. I'll go out and see that the stock's all right, and then go to bed."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," ejaculated the widow. "Repose is nature's sweet restorer, says the poet. I can see how recalling the dreadful scenes with those peculiar"—but he was gone.

In passing out, he caught sight of Jane whisking back into the kitchen. "She's been listening," he thought. "Well, I'll go to town to-morrow afternoon, get a stove for my room up stairs and stuff the key-hole."

He went to the barn and looked with envy at the placid cows and quiet horses. At last, having lingered as long as he could, he returned to the kitchen. Jane had washed and put away the supper dishes after a fashion, and was now sitting on the edge of a chair in the farthest corner of the room.

"Take this candle and go to your mother," he said curtly. Then he fastened the doors and put out the lamp. Standing for an instant at the parlor entrance, he

added, "Please rake up the fire and put out the light before you come up. Good night."

"Oh, certainly, certainly, we'll look after everything just as if it was our own. The sense of strangeness will soon pass"—but his steps were half-way up the stairs.

Mother and daughter listened until they heard him overhead, then taking the candle, they began a most minute examination of everything in the room.

Poor Holcroft listened also, too worried, anxious and nervous to sleep until they came up and all sounds ceased in the adjoining apartment.

CHAPTER V.—MRS. MUMPSON TAKES UP HER BURDENS.

The next morning, Holcroft awoke early. The rising sun flooded his little room with mellow light. It was impossible to give way to dejection in that radiance, and hope, he scarcely knew why, sprung up in his heart. He was soon dressed, and having kindled the kitchen fire, went out on the porch. There had been a change in the wind during the night, and now it blew softly from the south. The air was sweet with the indefinable fragrance of spring. The real notes of bluebirds were heard on every side. Migratory robins were feeding in the orchard, whistling and calling their noisy congratulations on arriving at old haunts. The frost was already oozing from the ground, but the farmer welcomed the mud, knowing that it indicated a long advance towards ploughing and planting time.

He bared his head to the sweet, warm air and took long, deep breaths. "If this weather holds," he muttered, "I can soon put in some early potatoes on that warm hillside yonder. Yes, I can stand even her for the sake of being on the old place in mornings like this. The weather'll be getting better every day and I can be out of doors more. I'll have a stove in my room to-night; I would last night if the old air-tight hadn't given out completely. I'll take it to town this afternoon and sell it for old iron. Then I'll get a brand new one and put it up in my room. They can't follow me there and they can't follow me out-doors, and so perhaps I can live in peace and work most of the time."

Thus he was murmuring to himself, as lonely people so often do, when he felt that some one was near. Turning suddenly, he saw Jane half-hidden by the kitchen door. Finding herself observed, the girl came forward and said in her brief, monotonous way,—

"Mother'll be down soon. If you'll show me how you want the coffee and things, I guess I can learn."

"I guess you'll have to, Jane. There'll be more chance of your teaching your mother than of her teaching you, I fear. But we'll see, we'll see; it's strange people can't see what's sensible and best for 'em when they see so much."

The child made no reply, but watched him intently as he measured out and then ground half a cup of coffee.

"The first thing to do," he began, kindly, "is to fill the kettle with water fresh drawn from the well. Never make coffee or tea with water that's been boiled two or three times. Now, I'll give the kettle a good rinsing, so as to make sure you start with it clean."

Having accomplished this, he filled the vessel at the well and placed it on the fire, remarking as he did so, "Your mother can cook a little, can't she?"

"I s'pose so," Jane replied. "When father was livin' mother said she kept a girl. Since then, we've visited round. But she'll learn, and if she can't, I can."

"What on earth—but there's no use of talking. When the water boils, bubbles up and down, you know, call me. I suppose you and your mother can get the rest of the breakfast?—Oh, good morning, Mrs. Mumpson. I was just showing Jane about the coffee. You two can go on and do all the rest, but don't touch the coffee till the kettle boils, and then I'll come in and show you my way, and, if you please, I don't wish it any other way."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," began Mrs. Mumpson, but Holcroft waited to hear no more.

"She's a woman," he muttered, "and I'll say nothing rude or ugly to her, but I sha'n't listen to her talk half a minute when I can help myself; and if she won't do anything but talk—well, we'll see, we'll see. A few hours in the dairy will show whether she can use anything besides her tongue."

As soon as they were alone Jane turned sharply on her mother and said, "now you've got to do something to help. At cousin Lemuel's and other places they wouldn't let me. He spects us both to work, and pays you for it. I tell you agin, he won't let us stay here unless we do. I won't go visitin' round any more, feelin' like a stray cat in every house I go to. You've got to work, and talk less."

"Why Jane! how you talk!"

"I talk sense. Come, help me get breakfast."

"Do you think that's a proper way for a child to address a parent?"

"No matter what I think. Come and help. You'll soon know what he thinks if we keep breakfast waitin'."

"Well, I'll do such menial work until he gets a girl, and then he shall learn that he can't expect one with such respectable connections."

"Hope I may never see any of 'em agin," interrupted Jane, shortly, and then she relapsed into silence while her mother rambled on in her characteristic way, making singular inapt efforts to assist in the task before them.

As Holcroft rose from milking a cow he found Jane beside him. A ghost could not have come more silently, and again her stealthy ways gave him an unpleasant sensation. "Kettle is boilin'," she said, and was gone.

He shook his head and muttered, "Queer tribe, these Mumpsons. I've only to get an odd fish of a girl to help and I'll have something like a menagerie in the house." He carried his pails of foaming milk to the dairy, and then entered the kitchen.

"I've only a minute," he began, hastily seeking to forestall the widow. "Yes, the kettle's boiling all right. First scald out the coffee-pot—put three-quarters of a cup of ground coffee into the pot, break an egg to it, so: pour on the egg and coffee half a cup of cold water and stir it all up well, this way. Next pour in about a pint of boiling water from the kettle, set the pot on the stove and let it—che coffee, I mean—cook twenty minutes, remember, not less than twenty minutes. I'll be back to breakfast by that time. Now you know just how

I want my coffee, don't you?" looking at Jane.

Jane nodded, but Mrs. Mumpson began, "Oh, certainly, certainly. Boil an egg twenty minutes, add half a cup of cold water, and—"

"I know," interrupted Jane, "I can always do as you did."

Holcroft again escaped to the barn, and eventually returned with a deep sigh. "I'll have to face a good deal of her music this morning," he thought, "but I shall at least have a good cup of coffee to cheer me."

Mrs. Mumpson did not abandon the suggestion that grace should be said,—she never abandoned anything—but the farmer in accordance with his purpose to be civil, yet pay no attention to her obtrusive ways, gave no heed to her hint. He thought Jane looked apprehensive, and soon learned the reason. His coffee was at least hot, but seemed exceedingly weak.

"I hope now that it's just right," said Mrs. Mumpson complacently, "and feeling sure that it was made just to suit you, I filled the coffee-pot full from the kettle. We can drink what we desire for breakfast and then the rest can be set aside until dinner time and warmed over. Then you'll have it just to suit you for the next meal, and we, at the same time, will be practising economy. It shall now be my great aim to help you economize. Any coarse, menial hands can work, but the great thing to be considered is a caretaker, one who, by thoughtfulness and the employment of her mind, will make the labor of others effective."

During this speech, Holcroft could only stare at the woman. The rapid motion of her thin jaw seemed to fascinate him, but he was in perplexity over not merely her rapid utterance, but also the queries. Had she maliciously spoiled the coffee? or didn't she know any better? "I can't make her out," he thought, "but she shall learn that I have a will of my own," and he quietly rose, took the coffee-pot and poured its contents out of doors; then went through the whole process of making his favorite beverage again, saying coldly, "Jane, you had better watch close this time. I don't wish any one to touch the coffee-pot but you."

Even Mrs. Mumpson was a little abashed by his manner, but when he resumed his breakfast she speedily recovered her complacency and volubility. "I've always heard," she said, with her little cackling laugh, "that men would be extravagant, especially in some things. There are some things they're fidgety about and will have just so. Well, well, who has a better right than a well-to-do, fore-handed man? Woman is to complement the man, and it should be her aim to study the great—the great—shall we say reason, for her being? which is adaption," and she uttered the word with feeling, assured that Holcroft could not fail of being impressed by it. The poor man was bolting such food as had been prepared in his haste to get away.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

News of the greatest petroleum well ever known comes from Russia. It bursts forth, fountain-like to a height of 224 feet, discharging oil at the rate of 30,000 "poods," or nearly 500 tons an hour. It far surpasses the famous Droyita fountain.

BRIGHT LITTLE FELLOWS.

Qualities of Life by Those Who Are Just Lifting the Curtain.

A little lad who is accustomed to say his prayers every night has made it his special petition for a week past to ask for "pleasant weather." As may be understood, the daily responses have not been very encouraging to him, and when he got to this point in his prayer last night he stopped short, opened his eyes, and asked his waiting mother in plaintive voice: "Mamma, do you think God will say 'Chestnut' if I ask for that pleasant weather again?"—*Providence Journal.*

The 5-year-old terror of B—street was put to bed the other night by his alarmed mamma with a sore throat, a heavy fever, and other decided symptoms of diphtheria. At daybreak next morning the parents were awakened by the sound of the pattering of a pair of small feet going down the stairs. The mother arose and to her horror saw her sick child in his night-gown just opening the front door and gazing intently out into the freezing gray dawn. "For Heaven's sake child," she exclaimed, "what are you up to?" "It's all right, mamma," he sang cheerfully back. "It ain't diphtheria; there's no yellow flag out."—*Salt Lake Herald.*

Bessie—"Mamma, did Dod make ever'ing?"

"Yes, darling, ever'ing."

"Did'm make little baby?"

"Yes, He made your little baby brother."

"Toud Him make ever'ing yet?"

"Yes, yes; why do you bother mamma so?"

"Just ask Dod to make baby teep quiet."

—*St. Louis Chronicle.*

It was in a Sunday-school, and the rector had dropped in to ask the children some questions. Among others was the question: "Who fasted forty days?" to which the school shouted the correct answer. "But who else fasted forty days?" asked the rector, meaning Elijah, the prophet. At first there was a painful pause, and then one little shaver triumphantly replied, "Dr. Tanner." The answer broke the school up. —*Troy Times.*

Some time since the wife of a prominent citizen of New York City was trying to instill in the mind of her 5-year-old son what it meant to be generous, thus:

"Now, Willie dear, suppose mamma should give you a cake and tell you to give part of it to Harry, and when you divided it one piece was larger than the other; if you gave it to him that would be generous, but if you kept it for yourself that would be selfish. Do you understand?"

The little fellow thought he did.

The next afternoon, wishing to test the effect of her teaching, she gave Willie a large juicy orange, saying:

"Now, Willie, take this orange and divide it generously with Harry."

When to her surprise the child (who was passionately fond of oranges) gave it back to her, saying with a rough twinkle in his bonny blue eye:

"Here, mamma! won't you please give it to Harry and tell him to divide it generously with me?"—*The Judge.*



LENOITA TOILET.

For a bridal, reception or full dress toilet this design is especially suitable and its arrangement is not difficult to accomplish. A medium size will require ten yards and three-quarters of figured goods twenty-four inches wide, and eleven yards of plain goods of the same width to arrange as illustrated. The foundation skirt should be of lining and will require five yards and three-quarters. Price of patterns, 30 cents each size.

Labor turns out at six o'clock, and with busy pen or ringing hammer, lays the foundation for a competence.

ZAMPINA TOILET.

Combinations of lace and silk can be very prettily arranged after this model, which is a dressy evening toilet made dancing length. A medium size will require five yards and one-half of material twenty-four inches wide, three yards and one-half of lace flouncing and eight yards of narrow lace to make the toilet as illustrated. If it is made as represented entirely of material twenty-four inches wide, thirteen yards will be required. But this does not include the foundation skirt in either case, for which four yards and three-quarters of silk or lining will be needed. Price of pattern, 30 cents each size.