

A Scourge of Doubt.

OR.....

THE ERROR OF LADY BLUNDEN.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I have come," says Gretchen, shyly.

It is the night of the Potter's ball, and very nearly ten o'clock. Gretchen, coming into the full glare of the library lamps, looks like some white vision fresh from fairy-land, in her robe of snowy tulle undefined by color of any description, unless one counts the tremulous green leaves of the water-lilies that lie — as though just freshly thrown — upon her gown. Her hair (wise child that she proves herself) is quite unchanged, the same soft little wavy locks straying across her forehead that usually rest there. Her eyes, dark violet, and true and tender as that sweetest of flowers, glance down at Dugdale from under the long lashes that sweep the white cheek beneath. As a rule, no roses warm her face; to-night she is peculiarly pale,— pallid as her gown, fair as a fragile snow-drop.

"I dressed myself very quickly," she says, rather nervously, feeling as though she has laid herself open to the charge of vanity. "I have just three minutes to — to bid you good-night."

She pauses, and Dugdale says nothing. Perhaps something in the situation strikes her as comical, because presently she raises her eyes, and meeting his — and being cheered by the unmistakable admiration in them — she gives way to laughter.

"Won't you speak?" she says. "The truth is, I haven't come down so much to bid you good-night as to show you my new dress, and to hear you say you think I look very nice in it. And—and you haven't said it!"

"There are times when mere words seem poor. Come nearer, Gretchen. I can hardly see you there."

She comes slowly up to him, and, standing so, furls and unfurls her fan with a certain bashfulness that sits very prettily upon her.

"It is a very charming dress, is it not? It is mamma's present to me. Don't you think it suits me?" inquires she, anxiously.

"You are lovelier even than I thought you," returns he, simply.

"You have taken a weight off my mind. Your silence seemed to me so ominous that I dreaded a disparaging remark. I am very glad you admire me," says Gretchen, in a relieved tone, taking an exhaustive survey of her own perfect image in an opposite mirror, "because — to confess a secret — I have been admiring myself immensely for the last half hour."

At this moment, Parkins, entering with the admirably noiseless step that so becomes him, and on which he prides himself so highly, presents to Gretchen a very exquisite bouquet of choicest white flowers, arranged in a silver holder, and accompanied by a note.

"With Captain Scarlett's compliments," says Parkins, deferentially yet confidentially; after which he retires to the door-way and there awaits further orders.

"What lovely flowers, and how sweet!" exclaims Gretchen. "Are they not?" — holding them under Dugdale's nose.

"Very," replies he, who would rather have inhaled the breath of the "deadly nightshade" than Scarlett's gift.

"So thoughtful of Tom," goes on Gretchen, in a pleased tone. "I wonder what he says?" Opening the letter, she reads aloud little scraps of it as her eyes scan the page.

"So sorry he can't be at the Potters' to-night, as he has sprained his foot. Oh, poor, poor fellow! His love to me, and many happy returns of the day; and—and—yes" — an eloquent hesitation — "he hopes I will like the flowers; and—and that's all."

"There seems a good deal of it," remarks Dugdale.

"Who brought these flowers, Parkins?"

"Captain Scarlett's man, miss."

"My kind regards to Captain Scarlett, Parkins, and I am sorry he is laid up, and so pleased with his charming flowers."

"Yes, miss."

"Little Tom Scarlett seems most attentive," says Dugdale, with a short smile. With all his determination to appear unconcerned, his voice betrays him. He has been fighting with melancholy all the evening, and now it has gained the victory. Scarlett's flowers have proved "the last straw."

"What is it, Kenneth?" asks Gretchen, quickly putting the white blossoms on a distant table. "You are wishing for something, are you not?"

"Yes; that I might rise from this hateful couch, and put on my evening clothes, and go with you to this ball, and dance with you all the night. That is all," — with a bitter laugh. "A small wish, is it not?"

"I too have a wish," says Gretchen, infinite compassion in her clear eyes and a brightness that may be tears. "I wish that instead of going to this ball to-night, I could stay at home with you and help to kill those dreary thoughts that at times distress you."

"Don't say that, if you don't mean it," says Dugdale, rather unsteadily. As he speaks he puts out his hand almost unconsciously and takes hers in a close warm clasp.

"I do mean it," replies she, quietly,—so quietly that his agitation ceases, and his grasp on her hand grows lighter, though not less full of warmth.

"I sent for this for your birthday," he says, presently, drawing from beneath his head a case of purple morocco. Opening it, he discloses to view a bracelet,—a band of dead gold richly inlaid, and with the word "Gretchen" formed in diamonds upon one side. All round the name a small band of "margarites" lies like a delicate framing.

"For me!" says Gretchen, blushing hotly. "Oh, how lovely! How exquisite! And my own name, too! How did you manage that?"

"I ordered it for you some time ago. I am so glad you like it."

"It was too kind,—far too kind. How shall I thank you?" murmurs she, the blush deepening by fine degrees upon her pretty cheeks.

"Very easily," replies he, smiling at her evident, almost childish delight. "Do you recollect how once, when you went to the Scarlett's picnic, you told me you had thought of me amidst all your amusement? Think of me again, if only once, to-night, and I shall have more to be thankful for to-morrow than you have to-night."

"That is too simple a request," says Gretchen, softly, her eyes lowered. "Had I never seen this beautiful bracelet I should have thought of you all the same,—not once, but many times, to-night."

Silence follows this speech. On Gretchen a sense of melancholy has fallen too, curving the corners of her lips. Crossing the room, her soft white skirts trailing behind her, she draws back the heavy velvet curtains of the window and looks out upon the night.

"You remind me," says Dugdale, "of some picture, some story—a legend of the Rhine, I think it is,—as you stand there clad in moonbeams. Come nearer to me, or I shall fear to see you melt away altogether, as did the 'hapless lady' of that tale."

"There are times," says Gretchen, not noticing his last remark, but coming quickly forward into the fuller, warmer light of the lamps, — "there are times when I can almost read your heart. To-night it seems bare to me. At least I know you are vainly longing for something. What is it, Kenneth?"

"Death," replies he, quietly. "Why do I live? Surely extinction is preferable to the existence I drag on from day to day."

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"Don't speak like that, Ken; it saddens me," murmurs she, tremulously. And then, with some timidity, "Extinction is not for us. There is always a heaven."

"For such as you, perhaps. Heaven was made for angels; for myself — recklessly — 'I see no hope at any point.'"

His tone compels her, although reluctantly, to turn her eyes to his; and, seeing something in his face strange yet in part familiar, — as it were, the waking confirmation of a dream,—she says, hurriedly,—

"Can I do anything for you, Kenneth?"

"Nothing. Not you, of all people. There is no help for me, anywhere. I wish with all my heart I were quietly dead."

"Oh, Kenneth, not that! Do not wish that!" entreats she, hastily, a touch of terror in her tone. Great tears gather and dim the luster of her eyes. She draws her breath sharply, and lays one hand with a pathetic gesture on her bosom, as though to still the sob that seeks to rise.

"What can I say to comfort you?" she asks, sorrowfully.

"Forgive me," returns he, stricken with remorse as he notes the effect of his want of self-control. "I am a brute to distress you so, and on this night of all others, when you should know none but happy thoughts. Why, I have hardly wished you happiness and joy, have I? But I do, Gretchen, from my heart. You believe that, do you not?"

"I do, indeed; but I am glad you have said it," replies she, honestly. "Now go, child; do not keep your mother waiting. I am not fit company for you."

"I cannot leave you in this mood," says Gretchen, earnestly. "I know you well enough to understand how you will spend the rest of the evening brooding over—"

"I will not," interrupts he, eagerly. "I promise you so much, if it will please you. I shall think only of the good that remains to me. I shall think of you,—your friendship. Now leave me, while I am in my better mood."

Raising her hand, he kisses it impulsively; but, having done it, his brow contracts, and he colors faintly. Seeing, however, no anger and little surprise on Gretchen's face, he recovers himself.

"Go, Gretchen; go, darling," he whispers, in a low tone.

The tears so long delayed fall slowly one by one down Gretchen's cheeks as she mechanically mounts the stairs again to her mother's room. At the door she pauses, and, brushing them away, resolutely throws up her head, as though determined to suppress all other signs of emotion.

Mrs. Tremaine is still struggling languidly with a few more last finishing-touches she considers necessary to the perfecting of her appearance.

"We shall be a little late, mamma, shall we not?" asks Gretchen, sitting where the light does not immediately fall on her.

"Oh, no, dear. We shall be there quite long enough—too long — even as it is. A little of the society of such people as the Potters goes a great way. But for your father — who really has a perfect talent for taking up the most extraordinary

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

people — I should not dream of showing there at all. Where are my gloves? Positively, Tymon grows duller and more dull daily."

"Are these they?"

"Yes, dear. So clever of you to find them, and so like Tymon to put them where no one could possibly see them." (They are lying on the table exactly under her nose.) "Did I hear you go down stairs a few minutes since, Gretchen?"

"Yes, dear."

"How quickly you dressed! You know I always said Cole was a treasure; so unlike Tymon: Tymon positively can't hurry, and is never quite sure whether her head is on her shoulders or lying about somewhere. My dear child, that dress suits you

WORDS OF HOPE.

TO ALL WHO SUFFER FROM A RUN DOWN SYSTEM.

Mrs. Harriet A. Farr, Fenwick, Ont., Tells How She Obtained a Cure After Suffering for Two Years.

Thousands throughout this country suffer seriously from general debility—the result of impoverished blood and shattered nerves. To all such the story of Mrs. Harriet Farr, widow of the late Rev. Richard Farr, Fenwick, Ont., a lady well known throughout the Niagara district, will point the means of renewed health. Mrs. Farr says:—"For a couple of years prior to 1899 I was a great sufferer from a run down system. My digestion was bad; I had little or no appetite and was in a very poor state; I suffered from heart palpitation and a feeling of continual exhaustion. Doctors' treatment failed to benefit me and I gradually grew worse until I was finally unable to do the least work. I then began using Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and from the very first I noted an improvement in my condition. The severity of my trouble gradually lessened and by the time I had taken eight boxes I was again enjoying the best of health despite my sixty years. I believe that Dr. Williams' Pink Pills saved my life and would strongly urge all sufferers to give them a trial, believing they will be of great benefit."

When your blood is poor and watery, when your nerves are unstrung, when you suffer from headaches and dizziness, when you are pale, languid and completely run down, Dr. Williams' Pink Pills will promptly restore your health by renewing and enriching the blood. They are a prompt and certain cure for all troubles having their origin in a poor and watery condition of the blood. But only the genuine cure and these bear the full name, "Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People," on the wrapper around every box. Sold by all dealers in medicine or sent post paid at 50 cents a box or six boxes for \$2.50, by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

deliciously. I have seldom seen you look so charming. And it isn't affectionate prejudice on my part; no, really; it is the whole arrangement that is in such admirable form. My own choosing, too. So glad it is a success, dear. I was always famous for my unerring taste. Has your father seen you? and Kenneth?"

"Not papa yet; but I went to the library to — to show Kenneth your pretty present."

"And he was pleased with it?"

"I think so; yes, I am sure of it. At least he said so." She hesitates over this speech, and blushes rather provokingly.

"Well, of course he would, you know," says Mrs. Tremaine.

"He"—nervously — "he gave me this bracelet, mamma; is it not lovely?"

"When?"

"Just now. When I went to see him in the library he gave it to me as a birthday present. Is it not charming? See," — slipping it off her arm, — "my name is written on it."

"It is beautiful," says Mrs. Tremaine, in a curious tone. She is looking, not at the bracelet, but at her daughter's eyes. "You have been crying," she says, quietly, without removing her gaze.

"Yes,—a little," — blushing crimson now. "I could not help it. He looked so sad, so lonely, so regretful. It does seem hard that he can never again go to a ball or enjoy life as other men can."

"It is," Mrs. Tremaine has grown absent, and is now examining the bracelet.

"What did he say to you when giving it?"

"Nothing,—except that he was glad it pleased me, and that."

"The name is perfectly done, and the diamonds very fine. He must have ordered it for you."

"Of course; he said so."

"It is a very handsome present, and a very expensive one. Are you quite sure, Gretchen,—again raising her eyes to her daughter's,—"quite sure you wish to accept it?"

There is a world of meaning in her tone.

"Wish!" says Gretchen, puzzled. "But of course I could not refuse. He seemed so glad to give it; and he has so few pleasures. I felt it would pain him to return it, and — he has so much pain."

"Take care you do not increase it," says Mrs. Tremaine, still in the same curious tone. "Mental pain, child, is worse than bodily."

"What do you mean, mamma?" asks Gretchen, shrinking a little. The flush fades from her cheek, leaving a deadly pallor to replace it. Her eyes grow larger. Instinctively she lays one hand upon the arm of the chair near her.

"Perhaps nothing. But thoughtlessness causes more trouble and pain than people know of. Are you ready, dear? Is Kitty coming?"

"I shall see," says Gretchen, in a stifled tone, hurrying gladly from the room.

She sighs profoundly, smooths away the lines from her forehead with careful fingers, and, gathering

up her fan and scent-bottle, sweeps from the room to her carriage.

Dugdale, hearing the door close upon them, and the servants returning again along the hall, moves his head to take up his neglected book, determined to be faithful to his promise to Gretchen not to let morbid thoughts get possession of him. As he does so, his eyes fall upon an object lying on one of the distant tables,—an object full of interest to him. It is Scarlett's bouquet that lies there, withering and forgotten! (To be Continued.)

GUTTA PERCHA.

The Germans Have Found Large Quantities of It.

The German Colonial Society, two years ago, offered a reward of 3,000 marks for the finding of a plant in any of the German colonies which would supply gutta percha suitable for cable purposes. A despatch from German New Guinea, received a few weeks ago, says that gutta percha has been found there in large quantities.

This is good news indeed, for scarcely any tropical product is more needed. In writing on gutta percha a while ago, Major J. O. Kerbey said that the demand for this substance was now about 600 times greater than the supply. The reason for this is that gutta percha is getting scarce, and it is the only substance used for covering ocean cables that is not soon destroyed by the effect of salt water.

It is known that the gutta percha tree thrives in the Philippines, though it does not abound there in great quantities. One of the reports of the Philippine commission encouraged the belief that the industry there may be largely developed. This should be done if possible, as gutta percha is a very paying product and would add a great deal to the wealth of the islands.

Until recently Great Britain and Holland were supposed to own all the gutta percha lands outside of the Philippines. It now looks as though the United States and Germany would be added to the lands having a large interest in this product. France also is sending gutta percha seedlings to all her tropical possessions, and great attention will hereafter be paid in several countries to the cultivation of this product.

A discovery was recently made that may have great effect upon increasing the supply. It has always been supposed that it was necessary to cut down the tree in order to secure the milky juice. It is said that at least 150,000,000 trees have thus been destroyed in the past half century. It is now asserted that a method of tapping may be employed which will preserve the tree so that it will produce for many years.

BABY'S BIRTHRIGHT

Is Health and Happiness.—How Mothers Can Keep Their Little Ones Well.

Health is the birthright of all little ones. It is a mother's duty to see that her baby enjoys it. Mother's greatest aid in guarding children's health is Baby's Own Tablets—a medicine which can be given with perfect safety to the youngest baby. Among the many mothers who have proved the value of this medicine is Mrs. J. W. Booth, Bar River, Ont. She says:—"My baby suffered greatly from sore mouth and bad stomach. Several doctors prescribed for her, but nothing seemed to benefit her in the least till I began giving her Baby's Own Tablets, and then in a short time my little one was fully restored to health. I would not be without the Tablets in the house, and would advise all mothers to use them when their children are ailing."

Baby's Own Tablets are used in thousands of homes in Canada and always with beneficial results. They contain absolutely no opiate or other harmful drug; are mild, but sure in their action and pleasant to take. The very best medicine for all troubles of the stomach and bowels, curing colic, indigestion, constipation, diarrhoea and simple fever. They give relief in teething troubles, dispel worms, promote healthful sleep and cure all the minor ailments of children. Price 25 cents a box at all druggists, or sent by mail post paid, by writing direct to The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont., or Schenectady, N.Y.

RAZOR GRINDING FALLING OFF.

Considerable concern is felt in Sheffield, England, at the decrease in the number of razor grinders, which has heretofore been an important craft in Sheffield. It is estimated that fully 25 per cent. of the old journeymen have either died or dropped out of the business, so that only 300 grinders are left. The interesting feature is that young men appear averse to apprentice themselves at the trade, so that, with the further natural inroads on the ranks, the razor-grinding business may use an acute stage, particularly as no machinery has yet been devised to supersede hand labor for this operation.

ONE WAY.

Husband—"I expect some of my relatives on a visit next week, dear. Can you suggest anything to make them happy while they are here?"
Wife—"I might leave town."

Obstinate Case of Itching Eczema

Leg and Foot a Mass of Sores that Doctors Could Not Heal—A Thorough and Lasting Cure by Dr. Chase's Ointment.

This letter from Tilsonburg, Ont., is an unsolicited testimonial to the extraordinary healing powers of Dr. Chase's Ointment. This is one more example of how this great ointment cures when all other means have failed. There is something almost magical about the way the preparation heals and cures. People who have not used it can scarcely understand how it can be so effective.

Mr. W. D. Johnson, Tilsonburg, Ont., writes:—"My father has been entirely cured of a long-standing and obstinate case of eczema by the use of Dr. Chase's Ointment. His leg and foot were a mass of sores, and he suffered something terrible from the stinging and itching. Though he used a great many remedies and was treated by one of the best doctors here, he could get no permanent relief until he began the use of Dr. Chase's Ointment."

"This preparation was so cooling and soothing that the very first application brought relief, and it was not long until the leg and foot were perfectly healed and cured. It is a pleasure for him to recommend this ointment because of the great benefit he derived from it, and he will gladly answer any questions from other sufferers."

Dr. Chase's Ointment is useful in a score of ways. For every irritation or eruption of the skin it affords prompt relief. It heals and soothes wounds, scalds and burns, and has never been equalled as a cure for eczema, salt rheum, tetar and scald head. Sixty cents a box at all dealers or Edmanson, Bates & Co., Toronto.