

A Scourge of Doubt.

OR.....
THE ERROR OF LADY BLUNDEN.

CHAPTER IX.

The year is drawing to its close,—is rushing with mad haste into the arms of death. There is no shrinking, such as you and I might feel, no eager longing for delay, no touch of faintness as the end draws near; with storm, and rain, and raging tempest the strong year hurries onward, age, and the weight of all the bitter griefs and cruel crimes it carries, being powerless to stay its flight.

It is bleak December. And this day week will be Christmas day. Kitty has been married now for more than a month, and has written two or three happy letters to the Towers from her resting place in Rome. The day is murky, and full of unshed rain; that is, the clouds lower, and the winds moan, and a gray veil covers the land, and one expects the coming deluge every moment. Yet it tarries spitefully, as though it knew that, though grief saddens, suspense kills.

Such days are trying to the temper. Even Brandy, who has obtained leave for Christmas, and has been at home now two days, and who has absolutely no temper to speak of, grows slightly intolerable. Having tired of flattening his nose against the window pane and making impossible bets about the rain drops as they hurried madly down the glass, he desists from such light amusement and turns his kind attention upon Flora. It is so kind that presently it reduces her to tears and extreme anger.

"Brandrum and Flora, why is it that you two cannot be alone for five minutes without causing unpleasantness?" says Mrs. Tremaine, entering the room where both are.

"My dear mother, it is nothing," says Brandy, elaborately. "I happened, unfortunately, to tell Flora I thought I saw a suspicion of veridancy in her eyes, and she rather took it to heart; though I'm sure I don't know why. I rather prefer green eyes myself. But that is all. I give you my honor."

"You are always teasing me," declares Flora, still dissolved in tears, "and my eyes are not green, they are quite blue. Kenneth said yesterday they were very like Gretchen's, and she has lovely eyes. As for your own,"—spitefully,— "they are the image of a cat's."

"As I say," remarks Brandy, affably. "It evidently runs in the family, like that very much overdone wooden leg. It is plainly hereditary. Indeed, to prove this to you, my dear Flora, I could repeat an expression formerly much in vogue among our progenitors, but which of late years has been adopted by the canaille and has become somewhat hackneyed and decidedly vulgar. You may have heard it; it is just possible. Shall I repeat it to you?"

"No, thank you,"—angrily,— "I don't care for your repetitions."

"But, my dear child, that is wrong of you. One should hold the traditions of one's forefathers as sacred, and not treat them lightly or with ignominy. I am surprised at your want of proper feeling; but, as I think it arises from ignorance and the mere callousness of extreme youth, I pardon it, and shall give you the expression I speak of."

"I shan't listen to it."

"Nowadays, goes on Brandy, unmoved, "when one man meets another he makes use of the silly formula,—which means so little,— 'How d'ye do?' but in bygone days when one of our ancestors came in contact with his fellow he said, 'D'ye see any green in my eye?' and was invariably answered in the affirmative. This is an indisputable proof that the green tinge was considered a charm even in the earlier and darker ages. You have it very rightly as yet; let us hope age will help to develop it."

"I don't believe you know anything about 'darker ages,'" says Flora, contemptuously.

"I have read more than you give me credit for," replies he, with dignity. "That was the age in which

the sun was always behind a cloud; and people walked about in sheets, with candles in their hands, looking for honest men. The fashion, I believe, was led by a certain Jane Shore of happy memory. At that time, too, candles were in such request (as was only natural) that Alfred the Great made clocks of them, and could tell you the hour to an inch."

"I wonder how you can talk such arrant nonsense!" says Flora, with a disdainful curl of her pretty lip. "Have you forgotten papa is waiting for you? He says he wants to speak to you,—no doubt about another unpaid tailor's bill."

"That is the 'unkindest cut of all,'"—rising negligently. "It makes me shiver in my boots. Now that you mention it, I think I did see a baleful light in my father's face when the post came in."

"I shouldn't wonder. Poor man!" "And yet"—cheerfully—"I think you are mistaken. Hope tells me a flattering tale; perhaps the governor is sending for me to present to me a little gift,—a delicate offering in the shape of a check for fifty pounds. If I get it, Flora, you shall have at least half of it. Now, will you not thank me for such a noble promise?"

"I will,—when I get it," replies she, with scornful emphasis.

"That will be in a moment or two. The instant my fingers close upon the desired bit of paper, I shall fly to you on the wings of love. You will stay here till my return with it?"

"Not likely! I shouldn't fancy remaining here forever," returns she, witheringly.

Meantime, Gretchen, having read Kitty's last happy letter of the morning to her mother and every member of the family, runs down to Kenneth—who is still a visitor at the Towers—to give him sundry extracts from it. To leave the Towers before Christmas, Mrs. Tremaine had said to Dugdale, would be simply madness, as of course he would have to come back again, for that festive occasion, and going backwards and forwards was "such a worry." So Kenneth had staid on, saying, with a laugh, the time would surely come when they would want to turn him out, and he should refuse to go. "Possession was nine points of the law," etc.

"I have had another letter from Kitty," says Gretchen, entering the

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library, with large eyes full of gladness and a bright smile.

"One always knows that by your face," returns he. "I can tell the day the foreign post arrives before you speak of it. Kitty is very fortunate; her life seems rich in love. Well, and does her letter please you? Does she still feast with the gods? So long married, and as yet no flaw, no 'little pitted speck'! It sounds like a fairy tale."

It is one of poor Kenneth's bad days, when all the world seems less than nothing to him and faith in any good appears impossible. He has turned his eyes from her griefed ones, and with an impatient gesture pushes back the hair from his forehead, which throbs intolerably.

"Kitty is quite happy—quite, if that is what you mean," says Gretchen, gravely. "Why should you question it? Why should you sneer at happiness? Surely there is such a thing, and you believe in it?"

"You accredit me with too much fine feeling," replies he, with a short laugh. "Don't throw me over altogether if I confess I do not?"

"You cannot mean what you say,

Kitty's case alone contradicts you. She, I know, will be always happy,—always."

"I'm sure I hope she may," says Kenneth, in an abominable tone. He shrugs his shoulders and gnaws viciously at the end of his fair mustache.

"I wish you would not speak in that tone; I quite hate it. It almost sounds as if you wish evil of my dear Kitty," says Gretchen, with some severity. "It is all in very bad taste. When people love they must be happy; and you know as well as I do that Jack and Kitty perfectly adore each other."

"I know I am a very ill-tempered fellow, and, what is worse, an ungrateful one, to speak to you as I do," says Kenneth, in a voice difficult to translate. "Why do you waste your time here, Gretchen? I am not worth it. Go to the others, and get what good you can out of your life."

"Your head must be aching very badly to-day," says Gretchen, gently, ignoring this speech altogether.

"It irritates me that you should stay here boring yourself to death with a most uninteresting invalid," goes on Kenneth, with fretful pertinacity. "I know I am a miserable wretch, only half alive, and good for nothing—and surely into the bargain; and that it is the extreme pity you feel for me that alone makes you bear with me as you do."

"I'm afraid your head is very, very bad to-day, my dear Kenneth," says Gretchen, with deep sympathy.

"It has often been worse"—half angrily.

"Not very often, I think. At least talking must be wrong for it. So do not say any more, but let me read to you. And, Kenneth"—laying a soft, kind little hand on his—"you must not think it is 'pity' brings me to see you; it is—that I like to come."

Kenneth makes no reply. He does not even press the kind little hand. He turns his head resolutely away and stares out of the window at the tall bare trees that in the far distance fling their naked arms wildly to and fro.

"What is it, Ken?" asks Gretchen, kneeling upon the footstool beside his couch and regarding him anxiously.

"Nothing."

"But surely there is something; some thought troubles you?"

"No."

"You cannot deceive me,"—seriously. "I am your friend, yet you will not trust me."

"There is nothing I can say to you,—nothing I dare say,—my dear, my darling! Can I speak of love to you,—I?" returns he, with sudden and mournful agitation.

Gretchen's hands tremble slightly. She does not blush, but a little paler grows upon her, and a faint smile comes and curves the corners of her lips. For a long time she has believed herself dear to him, and now to hear the thought made a certainty is inexpressibly sweet to her.

"I am very glad you love me," she says, simply, without hesitation, letting shy but luminous eyes meet his for an instant.

"Gretchen!"

"Yes. Very glad. Why do you look at me so strangely? Is it not true, then, that you do love me?"

"I never said so."

"No,"—laughing,— "your lips didn't, but your eyes did. And—"

"you would not have called me your 'darling' had I not been dear to you."

"How could I have so spoken?"

exclaims he, with bitter self-reproach. "To betray myself after the careful suppression for months! Gretchen, forget—forgive what I have said."

"But why should I forget, Ken? and what is there to forgive? Is it not beyond all question the truth? And why should I not rejoice at it, when—when I too love you?"

"What folly—what madness has possessed you?" he exclaims. "Gretchen, I forbid you to speak to me like this. Let me never hear you say such words again. It is a mockery,—an insult to such as I am."

"You mistake me"—begins Gretchen, growing very pale.

"Hush! I will listen to no more. You have said too much already. If"—with vehemence that hardly conceals his pain—"I ever led you to believe I loved you, I lied. I do not love you. Go, leave me. What have I to do with love?"

Frightened, stunned by the passion he shows, Gretchen rises and goes slowly towards the door. She is bitterly wounded by his words,

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"For some years I was a great sufferer from dyspepsia. My appetite became irregular and everything I ate felt like a weight on my stomach. I tried several remedies and was under the care of doctors but to no avail and I grew worse as time went on. I became very weak, grew thin, suffered much from pains in my stomach and was frequently seized with dizziness. One day a friend told me of the case of a young girl who had suffered greatly from this trouble, but who, through the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills had fully regained her health and strength, and strongly advised me to try these pills. I was so eager to find a cure that I acted on his advice and procured a supply. From the very first my condition improved and after using the pills for a couple of months I was fully restored to health, after having been a constant sufferer for four years. It is now over a year since I used the pills and in that time I have enjoyed the best of health. This I owe to that greatest of all medicines, Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and I shall always have a good word to say on their behalf."

Through their action on the blood and nerves, these pills cure such diseases as rheumatism, sciatica, St. Vitus' dance, indigestion, kidney trouble, partial paralysis, etc. Be sure that you get the genuine with the full name "Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People" on every box. If your dealer does not keep them they will be sent post-paid at 50 cents a box or six boxes for \$2.50 by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

while understanding perfectly his motive for using them. She has her hand upon the handle when his voice arrests her. It is full of deep contrition.

"Gretchen," he says, entreatingly. "Well?" coldly, without turning round.

"I have offended. I have behaved with unpardonable roughness; yet do not go until I have asked your pardon."

Slowly and with seeming reluctance she closes the door, and, again returning to his side, stands gazing down at him reproachfully, with clasped hands.

"I wonder how you can wish me to stay, when you do not love me," she says, tremulously.

"Perhaps"—with a sigh and a quick frown—"I wish you to go because I do love you."

"But how unreasonable that is! I think were I in your place I should be thankful if I found some one to care for me; that is, if I cared for the 'some one.'"

"I do care for you; it is useless my denying it now." Taking her hand, he holds it closely. "I love you madly, foolishly, because hopelessly. Day by day and every hour of the day, lying here upon my couch, I think of you only, and torture myself conjuring up scenes that can never be realized. This time last year I should have thought myself more than blessed in the knowledge that your heart was given to me a free gift. Now—How happy, how contented we might have been together, you and I! What a perfect life ours might have proved! But it is too late."

He pauses, but Gretchen makes no reply. Her hand lies passively in his. Her long, black eye lashes effectively conceal the expression in her eyes.

"Sometimes I picture to myself us two on board my good old schooner cruising in the sunny Mediterranean, finding each happy day happier than the last. Then we are in Italy, and I can see your beloved face grow grave and solemn over the past glories of mighty Rome; or dimpling with laughter in merry Paris; or calm with sweet thought in our English home. And then suddenly I awake, my fond dreams vanish, and again I know myself to be—what I am. Oh, to be strong and well once more!" he cries, throwing his arms with a passionate movement about his head. "Gretchen, is there in all this world a sadder thought than 'It might have been?'"

"Such as you are, I love you," replies the girl, earnestly. "Can you not find some slight comfort in that thought?"

"No. 'That way madness lies.' It is too dangerously sweet a thought. I dare not let myself find happiness in it. Dearest, what I said so roughly some time since I meant. What has passed between us to-day must never be repeated—never. You must promise me this, or I shall be compelled at once to leave this house, where I have been so content. You should not refuse me in this matter, Gretchen; you should give the promise I require willingly, because I cannot, of course, forbid you to speak in your own home, and—I cannot run away from you,"—with a spile more sorrowful than bitterest weeping.

Gretchen, touched by it, burst into tears.

"Have I grieved you, my own, asked Kenneth, pressing her hand gently to his lips. "You see, Gretchen, there is sadness in every thought of me."

"Yes, but gladness too,—my chief gladness," says Gretchen, with a sob.

(To be Continued.)

\$1,000,000 FOR DINNER.

Sumptuous Coronation Feast Eighty Years Ago.

Now that the approaching coronation of King Edward VII. of England is one of the principal themes of public gossip, it is interesting to recall one great incident of the coronation of one of King Edward's predecessors. It outdid everything of its kind that had ever taken place before as part and parcel of a coronation festivity, and it has never been equalled since in amount of material used or in the price that it cost. That incident was the coronation dinner of George VI. It took place in Westminster Hall eighty years ago.

The bill of fare was as follows:

HOT DISHES.

Soups—Eighty tureens of turtle, forty of rice, forty of vermicelli.

Fish—Eighty dishes of turbot, forty of trout, forty of salmon.

Meats—Eighty dishes of venison, forty of roast beef, three barons of beef, forty dishes of mutton and veal.

Accompaniments—One hundred and sixty dishes of vegetables, 180 silver boats of sauce, 210 lobsters, twenty boats of butter, and 120 of mint.

COLD DISHES.

Eighty dishes of braised ham, eighty of savory pies, eighty of a la daube, two in each dish; eighty of savory cakes, eighty of braised beef, eighty of braised capons, two in each dish; 1,900 side dishes, eighty of lobsters, eighty of crayfish, 161 of coast fowls, eighty of house lamb.

WINES.

Champagne, 100 dozen quarts; Burgundy, 20 dozen; claret, 250 dozen; hock, 50 dozen; Moselle, 50 dozen; sherry and port, 300 dozen; iced punch, 100 gallons.

DESSERT.

Three hundred and twenty dishes of mounted pastry, 400 of jellies and creams, 260 pineapples, 410 pines.

As the size of the "dishes" is not specified in the bill of fare, a pretty good idea can be had of what a big banquet this coronation feast was from the total quantities of all the edibles. They consisted as follows:

Beef, 7,422 pounds; veal, 7,133; mutton, 2,474; house lamb, 20 quarters; legs of lamb, 20; lamb, 5 saddles; grass lamb, 55 quarters; lamb sweetbreads, 160; cow heels, 309; calves' feet, 400; suet, 250 pounds; geese, 160; pullets and capons, 720; chickens, 1,610; fowls for stock, 520; bacon, 1,730 pounds; lard, 550 pounds; butter, 912 pounds; eggs, 8,400.

This grand feast and the other coronation incidentals cost \$1,340,000. A good estimate of what the banquet alone cost can be made by considering that the cost of the coronation of William IV., nine years afterward, when there was no banquet, was only \$250,000.

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Baby's Own Tablets are good for children of all ages from the tiniest, weakest baby to the well grown child, and are a certain cure for indigestion, sour stomach, colic, constipation, diarrhoea, teething troubles and the other minor ailments of children. There is no other medicine acts so speedily, so safely and so surely and they contain not one particle of the opiates found in the so-called "soothing" medicines. Mrs. R. M. Ness, Barrie, Ont., says:—"I first began using Baby's Own Tablets when my baby was teething. He was feverish, sleepless and very cross, and suffered from indigestion. After using the Tablets he began to get better almost at once, and slept better and was no longer cross. I think the Tablets a fine medicine for children and keep them on hand all the time." The Tablets are readily taken by all children, and crushed to a powder can be given to the very youngest baby with a certainty of benefit. Sold by all druggists or sent postpaid at 25 cents a box by writing direct to Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont., or Schenectady, N.Y.

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Dr. Chase's Nerve Food acts in an entirely different way. It gradually and naturally creates new nerve force, and builds up the system. You can prove that it is benefiting you by keeping a record of your weight while using it.

Mrs. S. W. West, Drayton, Wellington County, Ont., writes:—"About two years ago I got terribly run down, and finally became a victim of nervous prostration. I had no appetite, seemed to lose interest and ambition, and could scarcely drag myself about. Hearing of good results from the use of Dr. Chase's Nerve Food, I used three boxes with great benefit. In a short time I gained eleven pounds, and as I was very thin when I began to use the remedy I was very proud of the increase of weight."

Then the following spring I became rather poorly, and they again built me up, and gave me such a good appetite that I wanted to eat nearly half the time. I was so pleased with the cure the Nerve Food brought about that I recommended it to others, and they have told me of the benefits they had obtained from this preparation. You may use this testimonial in order that others may learn of the good there is in Dr. Chase's Nerve Food."

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