

# Fighting Life's Battle;

OR, LADY BLANCHE'S BITTER PUNISHMENT

## CHAPTER I.

It was a lovely evening in June, and the clock of Westbury church struck six as a young girl walked down the High street toward the lanes leading to the open country beyond. She was tall and slim, as a young girl of nineteen should be; slim and exceedingly graceful, and the light, springy step spoke of health and strength, as well as youth.

She was beautiful, was this girl, as well as strong and healthy; and if I were to go over her good gifts in catalogue fashion, I should tell of her clear-cut oval face, of the brown hair, almost black but for the golden tints reflecting the evening sun; of the large but expressive mouth; and, lastly, of the gray eyes that could be so soft or sparkling, demure or mirthful, just at the will and bidding of their owner.

But such enumerations are not of much use, because, elaborate as they may be, they never succeed in describing such beauty as Floris Carlisle's.

She had a tennis bat in her hand, and her face was slightly flushed, as if she had been playing up to the last moment, as indeed she had, for when the clock struck six she glanced up at the church turret and quickened her pace to a run.

Leaving the High street, she turned to the left, and, pushing open a gate, sped up a small garden path and ran into a pretty cottage, which nestled back from the lane as if it were trying to hide itself.

I say "ran in," because the door was open, showing a quaint little hall, with an old oak chest for a table, and an old oak chair standing beside it. On both the chair and the chest were carved a coat of arms, a dove fighting with an eagle above an ivy bush. They were the arms of the Carlises, and had been borne by one of Floris' ancestors as far back as the Crusades.

She threw the bat and her hat on the chest, and smoothing her hair with that gesture which only a woman can accomplish, opened a door on the left and looked in.

It was an extremely pretty and neat dining-room, and the cloth was laid for dinner, but Floris, after looking around and failing to see any one, went into the hall and called, in a clear, sweet voice:

"Mamma!"

At the same moment a neat and respectful-looking little servant-maid appeared from the kitchen regions, and with a voice slightly hushed, said:

"Mistress is in the drawing-room, miss—with a gentleman."

The large gray eyes expressed a faint surprise, as if a visitor were an unusual thing, and she hesitated, with her fingers upon the handle of the drawing-room door. But, as a very thin voice from within said:

"Is that you, Floris? Come in!" she opened the door and entered.

Mrs. Carlisle was seated in a chair beside the fire—there was a fire, though it was June, because Mrs. Carlisle was an invalid, and never quite warm from January to December—and opposite her sat a thin, middle-aged gentleman, with gray hair and small, sharp eyes.

At the entrance of the girl, the small eyes glanced at her with a sudden flash of admiration and surprise, then sought the fire again.

Mrs. Carlisle's face was very pale, and there was a troubled, anxious and extremely perplexed look in her face.

"This is my daughter, Mr. Morrel," she said, faintly; "Floris, this is Mr. Morrel, the lawyer."

Mr. Morrel rose and bowed sharply and quickly, as if he could scarcely spare time for the ceremony, and Floris inclined her head with a slight look of curiosity.

There was silence for a moment; then Mrs. Carlisle rose, and drew her silk shawl around her.

"You will stay and dine with us, Mr. Morrel?" she asked, almost pleadingly.

The lawyer glanced at his watch with a frown, as if he had a private quarrel with it, and looked up sharply.

"I have to catch the eight o'clock train, ma'am."

"You will have plenty of time," said Mrs. Carlisle; "I—I should be glad if you will stay, because you

can explain this—this business to my daughter better than I can. Indeed, I fear I do not understand it," and she looked from one to the other with a perplexed and feeble glance.

Floris went toward her and arranged the shawl that had fallen askew, and the three went into the dining-room. It was the picture of comfort, and the hatchet-faced lawyer looked around and rubbed his hands, then frowned as if he had remembered something, coughed huskily, and sank into his chair with a sigh.

Mrs. Carlisle sat at the bottom of the table, and Floris at the head and it was to Floris that the soup was brought, as if she were the presiding genius.

"Have you come from London, Mr. Morrel?" she asked, in a clear, soft voice, which made one pause before answering, in case she should speak again.

"Yes," he said, sharply; "by the four-thirty! Very slow train! Shamefully late! But railway directors don't understand the value of time."

"And lawyers do!" said Floris, with a smile.

"They do," he asserted, and then attacked the fish as if in illustration of the truth of his assertion.

Floris looked at him with a curiosity which would have been amused but for the pale, anxious face opposite her.

"Where have you been, Floris?" asked Mrs. Carlisle, to break the silence.

"To Lady Burton's tennis party, mamma."

"Oh, yes! I had forgotten," said Mrs. Carlisle, with a sigh.

"Do you play tennis, Mr. Morrel?" asked Floris.

"No, Miss Carlisle; I have no leisure for tennis. I hope you had a pleasant afternoon."

"Yes, very!" she said.

The conversation dropped again. It was evident that both the lawyer and Mrs. Carlisle were too full of some business matter to talk of anything else, and Floris relapsed into silent attention to their guest.

Presently the servant left the room, and Mrs. Carlisle, gently pushing the port decanter to the lawyer, said:

"Perhaps you will let us stay while you take your wine, Mr. Morrel, and—tell my daughter about this business."

"Certainly, ma'am; but I don't drink port; it muddles the brains, and lawyers have to keep their clear."

Mrs. Carlisle sighed, and Floris rose and brought some claret from the sideboard.

The lawyer bowed, sipped the wine, and cleared his throat.

"I've come down to tell your mamma, Miss Carlisle, that the case has closed," he said, looking at her with a sharp interest in his small eyes.

"The case?" repeated Floris, knitting her brows; then she smiled. "I beg your pardon. I had almost forgotten," she explained.

"I have known about it is long, ever since I can remember, that strange as it all seems, I have almost learned to forget it!"

"No doubt," he said gravely.

"The lawsuit was commenced during your grandfather's time."

"Yes," said Floris, smiling still; "I can remember, when I was a child, hearing another girl boast that she had a baronet in her family, and my retort that we had a chancery suit in ours."

The lawyer didn't look quite so amused as he might have done; perhaps he felt there was some sarcasm on "the laws' delays."

"In your grandfather's time," he repeated. "He and Lord Norman were distantly connected—"

"We always denied the relationship," murmured Mrs. Carlisle.

The lawyer bowed.

"At any rate, the two families, the Carlises and the Normans, were mixed up, if I may use the expression, in some way or other."

"It was something to do with some land," murmured Mrs. Carlisle. "I don't understand it; I never did."

"And no one else, it would appear," said Floris, gently, but with a smile, "seeing that it has taken two generations to puzzle it out."

"And some of the most learned men on the bench, at the bar!" said Mr. Morrel. "At any rate, the

two families quarreled about the land, and threw it into chancery. It is very easy—indeed, it is the easiest thing in the world to put a thing into chancery, and about the hardest thing to get it out again," and he then coughed behind his hand.

Floris leaned back in her chair, with her hands folded in her lap, and her beautiful gray eyes fixed on the window opposite her with dreamy intentness.

"The question at issue," resumed Mr. Morrel, "was very small to begin with, but its proportions grew as the case progressed."

"Yes," said Floris, softly, "and the costs, too, Mr. Morrel. We used to live at the Hall at one time."

The lawyer coughed again.

"Costs will grow, Miss Carlisle, in such a case as this. The suit's become one of the most celebrated on record. It will—here he bowed impressively—"supply precedents for future cases unto the end of time."

"We ought to feel very proud," said Floris, with a low laugh.

"You ought," he asserted, quite seriously. "It is quite an honor to be a party to the suit of Norman versus Carlisle!"

"It has been a very expensive honor," she said, smiling gently.

"Ahem! Yes, no doubt. But to come to the point. The case, I am proud and happy to say, was closed to-day. That is, I should be proud and happy," he corrected himself, with a slight flush, "if it had been closed with a different decision."

"Then we have lost?" said Floris, without any great show of interest.

"He wagged his head gravely.

"I regret to say that you have, Miss Carlisle. After patient hearing in one court after another, the case has been carried to the Lords, and the final decision has been pronounced in favor of Lord Norman."

Mrs. Carlisle uttered a feeble moan, but Floris turned her lovely gray eyes on the thin face of the lawyer, without any suspicion of the significance of his words.

"Lord Norman," she repeated softly, almost absently, thinking how, throughout her short life, that name had haunted and hovered about her. "Well, I suppose it is just."

"We always considered that his claim was most unjust," murmured Mrs. Carlisle. "I never understood it! Your poor father used to spend hours in trying to explain the case to me, but I always got confused and muddled."

"The effect upon a great many persons beside yourself, madam, said the lawyer.

Floris had risen, and stood at the window looking out at the view which, like a lovely panorama, stretched before her. There was not a hill or tree that she did not know and love. The lawyer's dry voice recalled her to herself.

"Yes, we, on our side, always thought the Norman claim unjust, of course, or we should not have continued fighting."

"But do you not think so now?" said Floris, turning to him.

"The highest court in the land has pronounced in his favor," replied the lawyer, significantly.

Floris sighed.

"Well," she said, gently. "I am sure that we are glad that it is all over, and that the case is decided. Lord Norman is quite welcome to the prize he has fought for—whatever it is—I don't know what it is!"

"A very large sum of money," said the lawyer, grimly, and Mrs. Carlisle moaned again.

"Which we might have won, and which would have made us rich again. Never mind, mamma," and as she spoke she turned, with a bright, consoling smile, upon the feeble lady shivering in her easy-chair.

"Money isn't everything, as somebody says. Lord Norman is quite welcome to it, is he not?"

Mrs. Carlisle did not reply, and Mr. Morrel looked from one to the other rather curiously and in silence for a minute or so. Then he coughed, and with hesitation and embarrassment staring from every sharp feature, said:

"Ahem! If it were only the sum in dispute that was affected by the decision, Miss Carlisle, it would not so much matter."

"What else is there?" asked Floris, with quiet surprise.

"The costs," replied the lawyer, grimly; "the expenses of this trial and the one preceding it—"

"But we have been paying costs ever since I can remember!" she said. "It is the costs in this 'celebrated case,' of which we ought to be so proud, which has driven us from the Hall to this cottage; it is the costs and expenses which, like Aaron's serpent, Mr. Morrel, have swallowed up our carriages and horses and menservants, and reduced us to the condition in which we are quite content," she added, with simple dignity that awed the dry and musty lawyer and made him cough again. "Surely

there are no further demands upon us!"

"I regret to say that there are," he replied, and to his credit, he said, that he looked sorry, as his glance rested upon the slim, graceful girl, with the clear, soft voice and large, gray eyes.

Mrs. Carlisle groaned.

"There are the costs of these last two trials, Miss Carlisle, and they amount to a little over five thousand pounds!"

The blow for which he had been mercifully preparing her was struck at last.

Floris stood quite still for a moment, then she went and laid her white hand tenderly and soothingly upon her mother's shoulder.

"Five thousand pounds!" she murmured, in a low, distinct voice, that quivered for all her effort to keep it firm. "We have to pay that?"

The lawyer inclined his head.

"Each side to pay its own costs," he said. "Yours will be quite that sum; but don't be alarmed, Miss Carlisle—"

She did not hear him. Her eyes were fixed on the floor, her heart beating slowly and heavily.

Five thousand pounds! She knew what it meant! Five thousand pounds! It would nearly ruin them! In a moment she saw the lovely view, lying bathed in the sunset, fading slowly away, giving place to some squalid London street, the comfortable apartment was transformed to a miserable parlor in a dirty lodging house!

This, then, was what this man had come to tell them! That they were ruined!

Her hand shook upon the feeble shoulder, and her parted lips quivered as the tears gathered slowly in her eyes.

(To be continued.)

## About the Farm

### PHOSPHATE FOR HOGS.

A noted veterinary authority says: "If hogs show a tendency to weakness on the legs, feed less corn and more bran." The reason why bran is good for weak bones is, that it contains more phosphate than corn. But if the farmer has provided himself with a few bags of raw ground phosphate rock, he will find it an excellent thing to sprinkle a little of it on the floor of the pen every day. The hogs will root for it greedily.

Two years ago we studied the phosphate experiment made with pigs, at the Wisconsin Experiment Station. It was most convincing of the truth of the statement we have made. Three pens of pigs, of three each, were taken for the experiment. One lot was fed as farmers ordinarily feed hogs; the second lot was fed the same as the first, except that a little phosphate was added to their food daily. The effect was astonishing in the increased vigor and strength of the second lot. But it was with the third lot that the full truth was unfolded.

This lot was fed food from which all the phosphate had been extracted by washing, but the process left all other elements such as the nitrogen and potash, in full strength. The effect of the loss of phosphate on these pigs was very striking. They were stunted in size though well covered with fat, and at the stage of the experiment we saw them, they could not stand on their legs a minute. Get one of them upon his feet for a moment and he would commence to falter at once.

Here was a lesson in the principles of nutrition that was very valuable to the man who can take it in. Phosphorus is one of the most important elements we have for the support of the brain, nerve and bone in animal life, and for seed growth in plants.

We have always noticed that our own hogs will at once commence to root in and eat the ground phosphate when we sprinkle it on the floor of their pens. A small handful each day to each hog is valuable for the animal and the greater efficiency of the manure.

### FARM NOTES.

Repairs may be made on out-buildings, the work on the outside being done on mild days and the work on the interior on colder days. Grain in the bins can be cleaned and prepared for market, even though it is not to be sold at once, but it should not be left in bags as they are liable to be gnawed by mice.

If the landowner wishes to renew the growth of timber on his forest tract, it is a good plan to keep out all live stock that will be likely to injure the new and tender trees springing up from the seeds dropped by the parent trees at seeding time. It is remarkable how quickly Nature will renew a cutover or fire-scourged woodland, if she is left alone.

The science of plant life must be mastered by the modern farmer who desires a measure of success. He who neglects to become familiar with the elements comprising plant food gropes in the darkness of agricultural disappointment. Conducting a farm without studying the soil and its component parts results in failure just as merchandising and not keeping track of the cost and selling prices. The farmer cannot afford to neglect his accounts, with the fields and their annual products. He must be in touch at all times, with the source of income and know the gates that open to escaping revenues.

### LIVE STOCK NOTES.

If a horse voids whole grain his teeth need looking after. Have them filed at once. Don't bungle the job; get a man who understands his business.

Examine, or have a competent veterinary surgeon examine, the horses' teeth, and have bad ones pulled carefully and quickly. Horses suffer long from toothache, unsuspected; and when the cold iron bit hits the tooth with a jerk, it stes him frantic, and he bolts to free himself from the pain.

One of the greatest mistakes made in sheep keeping is having the lambs come too early, before the ewes have milk enough for them. Cold weather is nothing to the lambs if they have food enough supplied by the ewes, and to secure this in winter taxes all the skill of the shepherd. It is better for stock sheep when early lambs are not desired to have the ewes come in May, otherwise plenty of good clover hay, a liberal supply of roots of some kind, and half a pound of bran a day, and no corn at all, will enable the ewes to give the most milk for their lambs. Too much corn is destructive to sheep.

### GENERAL INFORMATION.

#### Tit-Bits of Knowledge About 'Most Everything.

Red and Green Snow has been seen in Greenland.

London spends something like \$4,300,000 a year on Poor Law officials.

Newfoundland is without reptiles. It is said that no snake, frog, toad, or lizard has ever been seen there.

More books are printed in Edinburgh in proportion to population than in any other city in the world.

The Queen's crown weighs only 39oz. 5dwt., though it comprises precious stones to the value of \$180,000.

Orange-blossom was adopted for bridal-wreaths because the orange-branch bears fruit and flowers at once, and is thus a sign of plenty.

Posters took their name from the fact that in former times the footways of London streets were separated from the drives by a line of posts, on which advertisements were displayed.

Alcohol distilled from currants is being used for lighting purposes in some parts of Greece, and will take the place of petroleum rather than gas, electricity, or acetylene.

One hundred years ago it was considered a wonderful achievement for ten men to manufacture 48,000 pins in a day. Now three men make 7,500,000 pins in the same time.

Black pearls are the most valuable, then pink, next in value white, and lastly yellow. Pearls are steadily increasing in price; they now cost three times as much as they did ten years ago.

The nut-trees of the world could, it is calculated, provide food all the year round for the population of the globe. Brazil nuts grow in such profusion that thousands of tons of them are wasted every year.

In order to give as little trouble as possible to his wife, should she survive him, an old carpenter at Surbiton, Surrey, England, has made his coffin, which he keeps in his little workshop ready for emergencies.

Lake Batticaloa, Ceylon, has the probably unique distinction of being the home of musical fish. The sounds emitted by these are said to be as sweet and melodious as those which can be produced by a series of Aeolian harps.

The title of reverend was first used in England in 1657.