

Fighting Life's Battle;

OR, LADY BLANCHE'S BITTER PUNISHMENT

CHAPTER VI.

Right across the magnificent opera house the two women looked at each other.

The expression of the fierce jealousy which had flamed forth from Lady Blanche's eyes passed and vanished in a moment, and nothing but a calm, idolent, almost indifferent gaze met Floris' one of frank admiration.

Lord Norman stood behind her chair, calm, impassive, apparently deaf and blind to all round him, with that sag frown which his admirers declare was unique and imitable. He had seen the flash of jealousy dart across the theatre, had seen the hot flush on Floris' face, but for any sign of recognition, he might have been indeed blind. Lady Pendleton, however, looked uneasy at his immovability, and began to fidget and cast glances at the opposite box. Presently she turned her head.

"Hadn't you better go across, Bruce?"

"Presently," he answered. The opera proceeded, and presently the great scene arrived.

Neilsson was in a beautiful voice that night and Marguerite's sweet, plaintive, soul-stirring death song rose and filled the house with its wonderful pathetic sweetness.

Gradually, Floris' face grew pale, her lips quivered, the tears gathered in her eyes and tickled slowly, like great diamonds, down her cheeks.

Never had she looked more lovely, more heart-moving; and as the blaze man of the world watched her, he felt an awful longing to take her in his arms, to bend and kiss the tears from the starlike face; as it was, his own face went pale under the spell she was, all unconsciously, weaving round him, and the hand resting on the back of the chair, touching her dress, trembled. He could not resist the longing to speak to her, and bent over her, murmuring:

"No, no! Do not! It is not even worth that!"

Without moving her head, Floris turned her eyes toward him, with a half shamed-faced smile, and wiped her eyes.

"I am glad, and yet so sorry—so sorry it is over," she murmured, as the curtain fell. "Who could help crying?" And she laughed tremulously.

"You see we have all of us seen it so many times," said Lord Norman in his low voice, which seemed meant to reach her ears alone; "and we get hardened. But I am glad you are enjoying it."

"Enjoying it! I have never been so happy in my life!" exclaimed Floris. A light shone in her eyes for a moment.

"You make me very happy," he said, in a low voice.

Instantly her manner changed, and the old, proud look came into her eyes.

"Are you going now?" she said, turning to Lady Pendleton.

"Oh, there's a ballet, isn't there, Bruce?" asked Lady Betty. "Please let us stay for the ballet. One always goes home so very miserable after 'Faust' without the ballet."

"By all means," he said; then he got his opera hat, and left the box without a word; and Floris felt that she had wounded him by her cold repulse.

Lady Pendleton shrugged her shoulders.

"At last!" she exclaimed, confidentially. "I thought he was never going. I assure you, my dear, I have been most uncomfortable. He ought to have got up and gone round directly she came in."

"Lady Blanche Seymour, do you mean?" asked Floris, indifferently.

"Of course. How well she is looking to-night," said Lady Betty, putting up her opera glasses. "She has got on one of Worth's latest. Certainly I will say that Blanche knows how to dress. I don't know any one who wears diamonds so well. Did you see her look across at us as she came in, my dear?"

"Yes, I saw her look across—yes."

Lady Betty laughed with a little malicious enjoyment.

"Blanche and I don't get on very well together, you know. I fancy she thinks I take up too much of Bruce's time. Ridiculous, isn't it? I cannot help his being nice and attentive, can I? I don't think she

liked seeing him here with me; she considers that she has the monopoly in poor Bruce. Look! There he is. How handsome he is! Really I don't think there is another man in the house with such a figure and—and—style, to say nothing of his face."

Floris looked across and saw Lord Bruce standing beside Lady Blanche's chair. He was talking, but not bending over her as he had bent over Floris; and Lady Blanche was speaking to him with her face turned almost completely away.

The orchestra began the overture to the ballet.

"I wonder whether he means to remain there for the rest of the evening!" said Lady Betty, with the pettishness of a spoiled child. "I suppose he will deign to come and see us home?"

The curtain drew up, and Floris turned to the stage and gazed at the magnificent scene spellbound. So enraptured was she that she did not hear the box door open, and it was not until she felt her hand upon her chair that she knew Lord Norman had returned.

"Well?" he said, and if he had been offended he had regained his temper, "not so good as 'Faust'?"

"No, but it is very beautiful! More beautiful than I dreamed it could be!" said Floris. "They seem to float on air; how they must enjoy it!"

"Was she very angry, Bruce?" Floris heard Lady Betty whisper. "Blanche, do you mean?" he asked, coldly, as if reluctant to answer.

"Yes, of course. I know she was angry, because she smiled at me so sweetly while you were going round, and avoided us so completely when you got there."

"You have wonderful intuition, Betty," he said, calmly, and turned to Floris instantly.

"Can you make the story out?" he said. "They are dancing an opera, instead of singing it, you know."

"I think I can," said Floris, "but I am not sure."

He drew a chair near to her, and leaning forward, explained the action of the ballet with a patience and earnestness which would have astonished many who knew him, his eyes fixed on her face with grave intentness the while. As he was speaking, there came a knock at the door, and a voice said:

"May I come in, Lady Pendleton?"

Lady Betty started, and uttered a birdlike cry of delight and surprise.

"Why, it is Bertie! Is it you, Bertie?"

"Guilty, my lady!" answered the voice, so pleasant and merry a one that Floris turned her head.

"Bruce, open the door!" exclaimed Lady Betty. "It is Bertie Clifford."

Lord Norman got up and opened the door, and a young man, a very young man, entered. He was tall and graceful, with fair hair that clustered in curls on his brow; a soft fringe of gold above his upper lip promised a mustache; his eyes were blue, and full of life and joyousness; and his lips were curved in a smile which almost made Floris smile to look at them.

"Why, Bertie, where have you sprung from?" demanded Lady Betty, laughingly.

"From Canada," he replied.

"Been out there for the big game, you know. How well you are looking! I am so glad to see you! How lucky I dropped in to-night. And Bruce too!" and he released Lady Pendleton's hand at last and took Lord Norman's. "So awfully glad to see you, Bruce! It seems ages since we met! And how well you are looking! I am awfully lucky! Do you know I hesitated outside for a moment before I came in! Never expected to see you, you may be sure, or I should not have paused a moment!" and he wrung Lord Norman's hand again.

Then his joyous blue eyes turned to Floris, questioning. She hal her face toward the stage, and Lord Norman made no offer of introduction, but Lady Betty leaned forward and tapped Floris on the arm.

"My dear, let me make you acquainted with an old friend—I beg you pardon Bertie! A young friend—"

"Now, Lady Pendleton!" mur-

mured Lord Slifforde, with meek reproach.

"Lord Clifford Miss Carlisle." Floris turned her head and bowed, and Bertie, as Viscount Clifford was usually called, started slightly, flushed, and then bowed. Lady Betty laughed with pleasant maliciousness. She saw the effect Floris' beauty had made upon the boy.

"And so you have just come from Canada, Bertie?" said Lord Norman.

Bertie responded with a smile and a laugh, and began to tell them some of his adventures. Floris scarcely listened, but the clear, fresh voice reached her ears and chimed in not inharmoniously with the music. All the while he was talking, the young viscount's eyes were wandering toward her, and in a pause of the conversation he drew near Lady Betty and leaned down to whisper:

"Who is she, Lady Pendleton?"

"My companion, Bertie. Isn't she beautiful?"

"Hush!" he whispered, with a bright blush that many a woman in the theatre would have given her suite of diamonds to possess. "Hush, she will hear you! She is lovely!"

He drew nearer to Floris, and seeing her opera cloak had slipped to the floor of the box, stooped and picking it up, put it on the back of her chair.

"Thank you," said Floris, looking round at him, and reading in his eyes the direct obvious desire to speak to her, she slowly moved her chair so that he might draw his near.

But when he had seated himself close to her, he did not seem to know what to say.

"Have you been long in London?" he asked, almost timidly, but his eyes showed the interest he took in her.

"Only a day or two," said Floris. "This is the first opera I had ever seen."

"Really!" his blue eyes expanding. "How jolly! I wish I had come earlier!" then he blushed. "Has Bruce—Lord Norman—been here all the time?"

"Yes," said Floris.

"Dear old Bruce!" he said, glancing slightly to the back of the box where Lord Norman leaned, looking at the door. "I am so glad to see him again."

"You are old friends?" said Floris, very quietly.

"Oh, yes; we were at Eton together; that is, I was there a couple of terms before he left, and we have seen a great deal of each other since. He has been awfully kind to me, taken me about, and put me up at his clubs. I am very proud of being his friend; there are so few fellows he is really intimate with. It is just good luck my meeting him here to-night. I heard at the club that he had sailed in his yacht."

"Lord Norman is staying in London to help Lady Pendleton at a fancy fair," said Floris.

"Really! A fancy fair! How jolly! I wonder whether she would let me help. I'll ask her!" he said, resolutely, and he got up and went to Lady Betty.

Lord Norman came forward, as if he had been waiting.

"How do you like my friend Bertie, Miss Carlisle?" he asked.

"Very much," replied Floris. "He has gone to ask Lady Betty to allow him to help her at the fancy fair."

"She will be delighted. Bertie is what is called in theatrical circles, 'a safed raw.' He is the pet of society; it is a wonder he is not spoiled."

"I don't think I should say that he is not spoiled," said Floris, with a smile.

Bertie, came back to her chair, as she spoke, flushed and radiant.

"I am accepted, Miss—" he stopped.

"Carlisle," put in Lord Norman.

"Miss Carlisle! I shall work awfully hard! There are lots of things I can do. You will see! We'll make a big success of it."

The curtain fell amid a thunder of applause, and Lady Betty, with a little yawn, shut up her fan and looked around.

"Don't you wait, Bruce," she said, with a significant glance at the opposite box. "Bertie will take charge of us."

A frown gathered for a moment on Lord Norman's brow.

"What have I done to be summarily dismissed?" he said.

"I was thinking for your own good, Bruce," she whispered. "Pray let me think for myself," he said.

Then he went to put on Floris' cloak, but Bertie, with hands almost trembled in his eagerness and delight, had got the cloak in his hand, and was reverently arranging it on her shoulders; then he offered her his arm, and Lord Bruce was left to escort Lady Betty. The two men

conducted the ladies from the box into the crowded foyer, and Bertie dashed off to find the carriage, which he managed, by dint of hard work and the bribe of a sovereign to bring to the door just five minutes before its time. Then he went back to the saloon, looking superbly handsome, with his fair face flushed with his exertions. As he entered he saw Lord Norman, as he thought, standing by the door.

"Why! Where are the ladies, Bruce?" he exclaimed.

The man he addressed looked at him for a moment, then turned, instantly swallowed up in the brilliant crowd thronging the corridor.

Bertie looked after him with astonishment, then mechanically made his way to where he had left the three, and found them standing in the same spot, waiting for him. He stared at Bruce with amazement, and in silence, for a moment.

"What's the matter, Bertie? Has the carriage flown away?"

"Why—how did you get in here again so soon, and without your overcoat?" asked Bertie, open-eyed.

"I have not left the saloon since you went, of course," returned Lord Norman.

"But I saw you outside here a minute—a second—ago!" retorted Bertie.

Lady Betty laughed.

"What nonsense you talk Bertie!" she exclaimed. "Bruce has not left us; how could he?"

Bertie colored.

"I have made a stupid mistake," he said, penitently. "I have got the carriage."

They went down without another word, but as they descended the stairs he looked from right to left, searchingly.

Lord Norman and he put them into the carriage, and Lord Norman stood by the window a moment after he had shut the door.

"Good-night," he said, in his low, musical voice, and speaking to Floris. "I hope you will not be tired in the morning."

"Thanks," she said, calmly.

The carriage moved on very slowly, and Bertie seized the opportunity to press forward.

"I may come and talk about the fair, to-morrow," he said eagerly.

"Yes, yes; do," said Lady Betty, putting out her hand. "And make haste back! You have no hat on, and will catch cold!"

He laughed his frank, boyish laugh, and, as if in echo, Floris laughed, too, and held out her hand.

(To be continued.)

About the Farm

JUDGING LIVE STOCK.

Stock judging is a skill naturally possessed by some and it is a science that the breeder and feeder should understand. The agricultural colleges are giving practical instructions in judging live stock that is one of the most fascinating studies of the college, as it includes the knowledge of improved stock breeding. The students visit many prominent breeders of the different breeds and at the Chicago International they test their judgment and skill.

Professor Ferguson of the Michigan Agricultural College gives the following rules to his students:

1. Have confidence in your own powers.
2. Concentrate your thoughts on the breed and breed type of the animals you are working upon.
3. Do not hurry. Take time to decide. Having done so stick to it. "Be sure you are right, then go ahead."
4. If possible, watch the class as it comes into the ring. There is often something about the style and carriage of the winner which marks him out as he walks.
5. Take a minute to look over the line from as near the centre as possible in order to get a general idea on conformation.
6. Then pass slowly clear around the ring inspecting each animal from front and rear.
7. Never be satisfied without using your hand in addition to your eyes. Appearances are often deceitful.
8. In handling always work from front to rear. With cattle work on the right side, approaching the animal from behind.
9. First pick out the winner of the class; then use it as your standard in placing second and third.
10. When first is placed, briefly sum up its strong points.
11. Look for characteristics and most common breed defects.
12. Pay no attention to either the men with you or the crowd

around you. Your business is with the animals.

FARM NOTES.

The quicker stable manure is thrown and spread upon the field the less the waste, whether the season is summer or winter.

The success of a beekeeper is not measured by the number of colonies kept, but by the surplus secured. Twenty-five hives, giving a surplus of 50 pounds each, are more profitable than 300 hives and no surplus.

Do not place too much reliance upon the seeds you may get from the Agricultural Department, either as to breed or fertility. Very often they are any old variety under a new name. A wise man has said that that which costs nothing is worth nothing.

Coal ashes, while not so valuable as wood ashes, are, nevertheless, worth saving. Coal ashes contain some fertility, but the principal benefit derived from their use is in loosening the soil. Many people do not appreciate the necessity of keeping the soil porous so that it will readily admit water and air.

In the construction of roads, the attempt should be made to get a smooth surface as free as possible from mud and dust; and these results should be maintained as cheaply as possible. Such results, however, can be had only by selecting the materials and methods of construction best suited to the conditions, and by continuous repair.

One of the best lines of equipment which any form can have is a good workshop well supplied with tools and machinery for needed repairs. Breakage and loss of bolts and nuts are of constant occurrence, and there is frequently much loss of time (for such accidents usually happen in the busy season, in not having the needed things at hand with which to make repairs).

Potatoes require a rich, thoroughly prepared soil. Stable manure tends to produce scab, and for this reason, it should not be used on potatoes. A complete fertilizer rich in potash, applied broadcast at the rate of 1,000 pounds per acre will usually give good results. In many localities scab is a source of serious loss to potato-growers. One of the best and safest remedies for it is to soak the seed for two hours in a solution made by mixing one-half pint of formalin with fifteen gallons of cold water.

Hard work never has been and never will be entirely eliminated from tilling the soil. Thorns and thistles and weeds it produces as it always has done, and it is still in the sweat of his brow that the soil tiller eats his bread. But we have relieved the farmer from more toil than would have once been thought possible, only it operates pretty impartially upon farmers of all classes. The better farming now needed must be the individual work and thought of the farmer himself. If he cannot plan, calculate and judge about the details of his business, he is in no better shape for success than his unskilled competitors, who, perhaps, work harder and for less wages than he.

THIS KING IN BAD HEALTH.

Cambodia's Ruler Making Things Uncomfortable.

The Paris Journal learns from Cambodia that all is not well with King Sisowath, whose health is being undermined by rheumatism and other ills. He is a difficult patient with whom to deal, and the French Resident is somewhat uneasy with regard to him.

The King has become neurasthenic; he complains that the dancers of his palace no longer dance as they used to; that the elephants of the palace die one after the other—a bad omen—and that the workers in the royal art palace do not work with good will. The monarch flies into temper at the slightest provocation, or without any at all.

King Sisowath is also troubled on religious matters. He sent for a French missionary, and, it is said, asked what he would have to do to become a Catholic. The populace is ignorant of these facts, but the King's entourage is aware of it, and views the situation with uneasiness. The Bonzes are opposed to the conversion of Sisowath, and declare that if need be they will shut him up in one of their convents.

The question of a successor to Sisowath is already being discussed. Sisowath himself desires to be succeeded by his young son Sonph-anovong; the Bonzes and the Ministers, however, favor the elder son of the King, Monivong, an ensign in the French army, at present at Pnom Penh, who is known to be well disposed towards France.

Your luck is good if the other fellow's is worse.