

Fighting Life's Battle;

OR, LADY BLANCHE'S BITTER
PUNISHMENT

CHAPTER VIII.—(Cont'd.)

Never had Floris looked more beautiful than she did to-night in the simple white dress, with its trimming of swansdown; and before they had been in the room a quarter of an hour, Lady Betty, much to her delight, found herself surrounded by friends and acquaintances, all of them "dancing men," who begged an introduction to the proud-looking girl seated so calmly and quietly beside her.

"What and I tell you, my dear?" she whispered. "You have created quite a sensation! Is your programme full?"

"Not quite," said Floris for she had scribbled some make-believe names in some of the spaces.

"Mine is!" said Lady Betty, gleefully, for the suitors for Floris' hand could not do less than ask her chaperone for a dance.

CHAPTER IX.

Floris danced one or two dances with strangers, then Bertie came up.

"I didn't like to seem too pressing, Miss Carlisle," he said, his blue eyes fixed on her wistfully, "but I hope you have saved me a waltz."

"Would you like to have this one?" said Floris.

His handsome face beamed. "Really? How fortunate!" and he put his arm around her.

If there was one thing Bertie did better than another it was waltzing. Dancing was with him, indeed, the poetry of motion.

Floris and he were nicely matched and made a splendid picture of youth and comeliness.

By the time they had taken a turn around the room, Bertie's heart was beating fast, and the blood coursing through the veins with the ecstatic delight of having her in his arms.

The band seemed to be a heavenly choir; he moved on clouds through joyous space; he was half intoxicated with passionate love and despairful longing.

"Shall we go on? Am I tiring you?" he asked presently, in an almost tremulous whisper.

"Oh, don't stop, please!" said Floris, all unconscious of the storm within his breast, of the mad longing that possessed him to whisper:

"I love you! Floris, I love you!"

"Have I got your step?" he asked, for the sake of saying something, for he knew that they were moving in perfect accord, like one person instead of two.

"Perfectly," she said. "How can you ask? It is a delicious waltz. One of Waldteufel's, isn't it?"

"Yes—I don't know," replied poor Bertie, wondering how she could talk thus easily and carelessly.

It came to an end at last, all soon for him, and he stood, as the music died away, panting a little and very pale. He was thinking how he should be able to bear seeing her dancing with other men for the rest of the evening, after the few delicious moments that had passed. He would go away, go home and shut himself up and think of her.

Floris' voice roused him from his abstraction.

"Will you take me to those palms, Lord Clifford?" she said. "I have been longing to stand underneath them all day. How calm and solitary they look out there in the dimness. One can almost fancy that they have the scent of the desert in their leaves still."

Bertie got her cloak, and they made their way into the conservatory. Two or three people were standing about, but Bertie found a seat in a quiet nook underneath the palms, a nook shut out from the gay ballroom beyond, and almost hidden amid the huge fronds of a royal fern.

"This is delicious!" said Floris, leaning back and pulling the leaves softly across her head. "If I were rich, I would have a very large conservatory, with nothing but palms and ferns in it, with just a trickling fountain or two, but no birds to disturb the solemn quiet; and I would not permit any one to speak above a whisper," and she laughed softly.

Bertie stood beside her, his blue eyes resting on her downcast face, with a passionate longing aching

in them.

"If you were rich," he said, scarcely above the whisper she had almost commanded. "Perhaps you will be some day."

She shook her head, smiling. "I don't know that I care to be," she said, as if communing with herself. "Rich people seem to have a great deal of care and trouble, and are no happier than poor people. I suppose Sir Edward is very rich?"

"Yes," said Bertie. "Immensely so!"

"And he works as hard as a city clerk, or harder, I suppose, and is always tired and worried to death. What a puzzle life is!" and she sighed.

He drew a little nearer, the quiet of the place, her sweet voice were driving him to rashness.

"There is only one thing worth having in life," he said.

"What is that?" she asked, looking up with a smile, which died away as she saw the paleness of his face, and the light in his eyes.

"Can you not guess?" he said, half fearfully, and yet with intense earnestness. "Miss Carlisle, I know that you will think me mad. I expect that you will be offended and angry. But I must speak, even though by speaking I anger you past forgiveness."

Floris half rose, but sank back again, and opened her lips, as if about to stop him; she did pronounce his name, but almost inaudibly.

It is a strange, mysterious sensation which a girl experiences the first time a man tells her that he loves her, and the quiet, hurried words had thrown a spell over her for the moment, rendering her powerless to move.

"Miss Carlisle!—Floris!—I love you!" he said, bending over her; his face white, his lips tremulous.

A swift tide of crimson flooded Floris' face and neck, then he, too, turned pale.

"Yes, I love you," he repeated. "I don't dare to ask you if—if you love me! I know that it is not possible. I know that I must seem like a stranger to you. But though you may have known me only a few days, I seem to have known and loved you for years. Floris, have pity on me! I love you with all my heart and soul—"

"No, no, Lord Clifford—" she faltered, at last.

"Yes, it is true. I know what you think. That I am light and frivolous—that—that—I am only one of the butterflies in the world, of no use or value; but, Floris, if you will let me love you, if you will love me a little in return; if you will only try to love me, I will prove to you that I will be less unworthy of you—"

"Oh, hush!" she said, trembling, a great wave of tenderness and pity sweeping over her heart for the handsome, true-hearted boy.

"Don't say any more, Lord Clifford. You—you—mistake! It is I who would be unworthy of you."

"Floris!" reproachfully, passionately.

"Yes, yes! Who am I that you should so humble yourself? Oh, do not say any more! I am sorry—very, very sorry!"

"Then—then—" he faltered, looking down at her.

"Indeed I am very sorry!" she repeated; "but I did not know, indeed I did not!"

"No, or you would have treated me coldly and kept me away!" he said, sorrowfully.

Then with a wild hope that was almost despair, he took her hand in his hot one and pressed it fiercely.

"Floris, is it, must it be 'No'? Will you not give me some little hope? I will be patient! I will not plague! You shall see how patient I can be—"

"Oh, hush! hush!" she said. "Do not say another word, Lord Clifford. It must be 'No'! I cannot love you. I am very, very grateful for the honor you have done me, and I know how great an honor it is! I wish—yes, I will say it!—I wish that I could have answered differently, but I cannot."

She let her hand rest in his while she spoke, then she drew it gently away.

He let it go, slowly, reluctantly, and his lips parted with a long

sigh, as if something had gone from his life; then with a brave effort he forced a smile.

"You have been very good to me, Miss Carlisle," he said, and his voice rang with pain that tortured him. "You have been more patient than I deserve. I will say 'Good-by,' now."

"There shall be no word of goodness or 'patience' between us, Lord Clifford," she said, "and if we cannot—if I cannot be to you all that you wish, at least we can be friends still."

Poor Bertie smiled and shook his head.

"How little you understand!" he murmured. "I know what you think, Miss Carlisle. You have heard, you know, that I do not bear the highest character for wisdom, and you think that because my past has been frivolous and foolish, that I shall get over this and forget it. Ah, you do not understand how deeply I love you! All my life will be changed from this hour."

"Oh, Lord Clifford!"

"Yes, Floris; I shall not get over this so easily; I shall not try to forget it. If I cannot have your love, I can at least endeavor to be less unworthy of it. You ask me to remain your friend! Floris, all my life I shall think tenderly of you, and of myself as your lover. Do you think I could bear to see you day after day, knowing that there can be no hope for me; that I could endure to meet you as an ordinary friend when all the time my heart was burning in the desire to make you my wife! No! I must go away. Good-by. Some day—who knows—I may be able to meet you without the pang of misery and disappointment which I feel now. Good-by."

His voice, the boyish voice which only this morning had rang out merrily, the musical voice which to Floris' ears had always something of laughter in it, was very grave and sad, and his eyes resting on her face were full of a great despair.

She put out her hand in silence, feeling that any word from her would be worse than useless.

He took her hand, held it for a moment, then raised it toward his lips.

"May I?" he asked, simply, too noble and chivalrous to snatch a kiss by stealth.

She did not speak, but her eyes, in which the tears were standing, answered for her.

Poor Bertie kissed her hand twice, then turned and hurried away.

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Floris sat under the stately palms sad and troubled.

No girl who is worth anything refuses an offer from an honorable man without being sad and sorrowful, especially if she really likes the man, and only just stops short of loving him, and Floris really did like Bertie.

His merry, boyish laugh, his frank brotherly way had been very pleasant to her; she only just discovered how pleasant now that she had lost them—perhaps forever.

Another girl might also have remembered and regretted that she had refused a viscount; but Floris gave no thought to Bertie's rank.

It was of himself she thought, as she sat with downcast face, and hands listlessly in her lap.

Why had she sent him away? Why had she not tried to love him? At any rate, why had she not asked for time?

She asked herself these questions, and did not dare to answer them.

There are times when we shrink from examining our own hearts, lest we should discover the truth, and Floris shrank from examining hers, lest she should find an answer there which would fill her with shame and confusion.

With a sigh she rose, then suddenly remembering that she was alone, and that she could not very well enter the ball room unattended, she resumed her seat, quite contented to remain in the quiet and cool for a time.

Presently the band, which had been playing a square dance, ceased, and the couples began to find their way into the conservatory.

Unwilling to be discovered, Floris rose and retreated still further into the dim region of palms and ferns, and found another seat still more secluded than the last. It was so far removed from the ballroom, that but for the sound of voices, and reflection of the lights on the fountains, she might have fancied herself in the recesses of some tropical forest.

While she was sitting there, a gardener passed by, and half startled by the apparition of a beautiful lady in a white dress, touched his hat respectfully and apologetically and turned off through a door partly concealed by creeping plants.

Floris was just thinking that she chose she might remain undiscovered till the ball broke up when she heard the rustle of a woman's dress, and a man's voice close behind her.

At the sound of the voice Floris started. Although it had only uttered one word she recognized it.

It was Lord Norman's! She looked around anxiously, and saw, through the fern leaves, Lord Norman and Lady Blanche sauntering down the narrow path.

Lady Blanche was magnificently dressed in an Indian silk of the finest fiber, and of the palest pink.

It was studded with pearls in the oriental fashion, and fitted her to perfection. Nestling in her golden hair were flowerets of diamonds, that sparkled and gleamed like fireflies in the fitful light.

The beautiful face, usually so cold and impassive, wore a faint, soft smile, that played about the perfect lips and shone in the velvety eyes.

As they approached, Floris saw that she had clasped Lord Norman's arm, on which she leaned with her other hand, and that her face was turned up to his with a happy, childlike smile.

Then Floris looked at him. Surely there would be an answering smile on his face! No man could resist the entreaty in those dark, velvety eyes!

But there was no responsive happiness on his face; grave, almost grim, it seemed by contrast with hers, and Floris saw that though he was presumably listening, to her, his attention was straying, and that he was thinking of something else than the beautiful woman clinging so lovingly, so appealingly, to his arm.

"I am so glad you have come, Bruce," Floris heard her murmur. "You said you did not intend to, and I was looking forward to a blank evening."

"I changed my mind," he said, if not coldly, carelessly.

"That is a woman's privilege, and one they do not extend to men, Bruce," she retorted, with a smile that seemed significant to Floris.

"Oh, men have all your weaknesses as well as their own, Blanche," he said.

Floris looked around for some means of escape.

To be found by them, playing as it would seem, at eavesdropping. The idea was terrible! But there was no exit save by a narrow path in which they stood, and hoping that they would turn back Floris drew still closer into her leafy shelter and tried not to listen.

"Shall we sit down, Bruce?" asked Lady Blanche. Floris' heart quaked.

"If you like," he assented. "But hadn't we better go back and dance this waltz? You won't care about missing it, you know."

"I don't mind in the least," she said. "If you would rather sit it out, let us do so. We can find a seat."

"The only legitimate excuse for a ball is dancing," he said. "We will go back."

Floris drew a breath of relief.

"Wait a moment or two, Bruce," said Lady Blanche. "I have something to tell you."

"Yes," he said, with a politeness that was worse than the most pointed indifference, and he looked down at her patiently.

Lady Blanche hung her head and pulled at the pearls on her fan.

"I don't know how to tell you, Bruce! And yet I must. You seem the only friend, the only one to whom I can come when I am in trouble. It seems so natural to think of you as a friend and adviser, Bruce!" and she glanced up at him, with a soft, lingering sigh.

(To be continued.)

BREED YOUR DAIRY STOCK.

The farmer who overlooks the possibilities of breeding dairy stock is losing one of his best chances to make money. The bull should be kept for something besides keeping the cows in milk.

In buying a dairy cow—just a general purpose milk cow at a private or public sale—you may buy abortion, tuberculosis or bad habits. Of course this does not apply to the breeders who raise stock for breeding purposes. That's their business and they must make good. But when a general purpose dairyman wants to sell, you may be sure there is some reason for it.

First of all you must have a good bull. Not simply an ordinary good one, but an animal that will improve your stock decidedly, a bull that you will have to pay a good round figure for. If you are not in shape to put up the cost yourself, get your neighbor to join with you. The bull will more than pay for himself if used equitably.

About the Farm

YOUNG PIG MANAGEMENT.

A hog is half made when past the weaning period without a stunt or kink in its growth. Every check or halt in prosperity through its first two months is more expensive than at any later period. Too much rich, feverish milk of the dam, causing thumps or other ailment, may leave harmful results, perhaps as much so as scant feeding or other neglect of the sow. More injury may be done to a pig's growth in two or three days than can be repaired in a month, even if he is made the subject of special care, which, where many are raised, is not the rule, nor easily practicable. "Good luck" with pigs calls for attention, and that, not occasional, but frequent and regular.

From the first week after farrowing until weaning time the sow will be little else than a milk machine, and to be a high-power machine in perfect operation she must have proper care.

Nothing else is so well calculated to make pigs grow as a bountiful supply of wholesome sow's milk, and the pigs that have plenty of other feed with the milk of a well-slopped sow for eight weeks will ordinarily have much the start of those weaned at five or six weeks, no matter how much food and attention the earlier weaned pigs may have had.

At eight or nine weeks old most pigs are, or rather, should be, fit to take away from the sow; some litters are individually older at seven weeks than others at ten, and better fitted for weaning. Sometimes it is necessary to wean when the pigs are five or six weeks old, and in other cases it may be advisable to wait until the pigs are ten weeks or even older. Breeders who wean at early ages generally do so in order to more profitably raise two litters a year.

Provided with, and taught to eat, suitable feed some weeks before, and pigs are not noticeably checked in their growth by weaning, but those that have been dependent mainly upon the mother's milk, when abruptly taken away from it, frequently seem to have their growth partially suspended for weeks. Many breeders successfully let the sow wean her pigs, as she will in time, and the change is so gradual that no pause in growth indicates when the milk diet ceased. A modified application of this, in which the pigs are separated from the sow at an age suiting their feeding and the convenience of the breeder, will not infrequently be found advisable, but by no means should the pigs be allowed to remain with a sow until she is virtually devoured by them, as is sometimes done.

It is not a good plan to take all the pigs from the sow, unless one or two of them can be turned with her some hours after, to draw the milk she will have at that time, and again, say after a lapse of 24 hours. The preferred way is to leave about two of the smallest with her for several days, and after that leave only one for two or three days more, by which time the flow of milk will have so gradually diminished that no injury to the sow will result by keeping them entirely away from her. This extra supply of milk helps also to push the smaller pigs along in growth and put them more nearly on an equality in size with their thriffter mates.

VALUE OF MANURES.

Compared with well-rotted barn manure, there are 48.60 lbs. of phosphoric acid in hen manure; 41 lbs. of potash to ten in barnyard manure; and 67 lbs. of nitrogen to eleven in barnyard manure. The analysis is based on a ton of hen and barnyard manures.

It pays then to take care of the hen manure. Give them a comfortable house and make them live in it. Don't let them roost all over the buildings and machinery.

SHE CAN'T BE BOTH.

It's not possible for a cow to be a remarkable success along two lines at the same time. She can't make milk and meat from the same feed. It's an impossibility.

"Well, why don't you say you wish you were a man?" asked Mr. Potts, during the little discussion he was having with his spouse about some matters of domestic management. "Because I don't wish anything of the sort," she retorted. "I only wish you were one."