

Fighting Life's Battle;

OR, LADY BLANCHE'S BITTER PUNISHMENT

CHAPTER X.—(Cont'd.)

"Why I dream even, don't laugh, of your very dresses. To-night you look like a vision of cold, pure ice, you see. Proud. So you shall be. Be as proud as you like, so that you are not too proud to let me love you. And, I, too; I am proud. But I am a bad lot altogether, my poor darling. Heaven grant I may be able to conceal it from you.

She smiled trustingly enough. "I will take you as you are, Bruce," she murmured.

"I am proud, too, little one," he said, very thoughtfully "and a monster of jealousy."

She laughed softly. "Are you? How much alike we are. My pride is only outdone by my jealousy. I warn you, Bruce, I shall grudge every smile you bestow on other women. I shall want all your soft speeches."

He laughed grimly. "I was never wont to smile much, or very rich in soft speeches, my darling, but what I have in stock shall be reserved for you. Ah, you know well how wholly and entirely I am yours, bound body and soul to your chariot wheel, so much your slave that there is not another woman in the world that is worth a thought to me."

She put up her hand with a little, naive caress, and laid it against his cheek.

"Ah, how happy I am," she murmured, so low, and yet so distinct that it reached the hidden woman opposite them, and went to her heart like the stab of a knife.

Then Floris started. "We must go. Why, how late it must be."

He laughed. "It is not late. What does it matter? Who cares?"

"Oh, but I must, sir. Lady Pendleton, my mistress, has forgotten me, and I must find her."

He laughed with grim delight. "Lady Betty, your mistress. Ha, ha! How surprised she will be, and yet, I know. I have caught her looking at me once or twice with that cock-sparrow expression in her eyes which makes her look so knowing. She will be delighted. Must we go? Let me put your cloak around you. Happy cloak. What a pretty one. What made you think of that dress, and its edging of swansdown? My beautiful angel," and he took her bodily and boldly in his arms.

"Oh, take care," she murmured, blushing, and looking around carefully. "Some one will see us."

"Who cares? And to think that only this morning you snubbed me. Actually refused to sell me the flower from your bosom."

She blushed. "Do you care to have it now?" she asked, quietly.

"Care? Give me a chance of getting it," he retorted. She took the crushed and withered red rose from within her dress and held it out to him.

When as, with a cry of delight, he eagerly stretched out his hand, she whipped hers behind her.

"Give me something in exchange, Mr. Bruce."

He laughed, his short curt laugh. "Take all I have," he said, then he glanced down and about him. He wore no rings, no trinkets he could despoil himself of.

"Give me that flower in your coat," said Floris.

"Ah, yes," he assented, entirely forgetful of the woman who only that morning made him promise to wear it, who pinned it in his coat with loving hands. "Here you are. Give me my rose," and he took it from her, and with all a boy's love and a man's passion, kissed it before he hid it in an inner pocket.

And so they passed out, arm in arm, heart to heart.

For a moment Lady Blanche stood leaning against the palm, her face white as death, her hands clinched at her side.

Death. She had died a thousand deaths in that last ten minutes.

Hope, joy, the future, all were dead, and from their ashes had sprung the demons of hate and jealousy.

Without a cry she sank on to a seat, and sat staring in front of her with clasped hands.

And she had lost him. Lost the man she loved more than life. And she had so nearly won him!

a week, a few days ago, he was almost hers.

The world had linked their names together. It wanted but the word to make him hers irrevocably.

And now she had lost him. And why? Because of this chit of a country girl, this girl with the round face and the gray eyes, this servant of Lady Betty's.

"Oh, Heaven, it was hard to bear. Hard, hard, hard! And he had told this girl that she had never loved, never could love Blanche.

Ah, it as hard to bear, too hard. She could not.

"I will not," she murmured, huskily; "I will not. There must be some way of stopping him, of balking her. She has caught him with her doll's face, with her pretended modesty and shyness. He must be saved! He shall not marry her; I mean it! But how can I prevent it? How? how? Oh, if there was some one to help me, some one I could depend on."

She looked around wildly. "I am only a woman, a wronged, insulted, helpless woman. If there were only some one who could help me."

As if in answer to her prayer, a voice from behind her said, in a quiet, almost sarcastic tone:

"I will help you!"

Lady Blanche started, and turning her white face over her shoulder, she saw a man standing half-hidden behind the ferns.

"I will help you!"

Lady Blanche started quickly, as if the words had sprung from the lips of the familiar demon, the demon jealousy, that at that moment was reigning paramount in her bosom.

She started even more violently as she looked at the man who had spoken, for it seemed as if the shadow of Lord Norman had sprung up beside her.

She even murmured his name. "Bruce!"

The man smiled sardonically, and shook his head.

"No, my lady, I am not Lord Norman," he said, calmly, with an ease that was almost insolent.

Lady Blanche looked again at him. The likeness to Lord Norman was extraordinary; had this man been dressed in an evening suit he might have walked into the ballroom and been mistaken by all but the closest observers for the earl.

"Did you speak to me?" she demanded, in the cold, hard voice which had struck a chill to many an inferior.

"I did, my lady, I heard your appeal for help, and—I answered it."

"Who are you?"

"I am a stranger to your ladyship, and my name would not enlighten you as to my identity. Just now, you called me by Lord Norman's name. Let me be known, for the present, as an individual who happens to bear a strong resemblance to his lordship. Your ladyship will be surprised to hear that I have been seeking for an opportunity to speak to you for some days past."

Lady Blanche was surprised, and for the life of her she could not keep her astonishment from showing itself in her face.

"I have watched, followed you night and day for days past, ever since I first saw you leaving the Duchess of Cliefeden's party a week ago. I, too, have been an eyewitness of the love-passion between Lord Norman and Miss Carlisle, and I am as desirous of spoiling his lordship's felicity as you can be."

"Why?" demanded Lady Blanche, her breath coming fast. The quiet, self-assured manner, the easy, self-reliant voice were telling upon her, impressing her strongly and strangely.

He smiled. "To answer that question would be to go into too long a story for the place and time, my lady," he said. "Let it go, if you please, that I am willing to bask Lord Norman's happiness for reasons of my own. Listen to me, Lady Blanche! This young girl comes between you and the man you love. I offer to separate them; to remove the obstacle! Will you accept my offer?"

"You cannot do it," she said, in a low, quivering voice. "You do not know him."

"Do I not? I know him enough to count upon him for his assist-

ance," he said. "Yes or no, my lady. Put aside the reluctance you feel to accepting the help of a stranger, who appears in this unexpected—romantic, if you will—fashion, and avail yourself of my services."

Lady Blanche was silent for a moment.

The music had ceased, the sound of laughter and many light-hearted voices came confusedly through the silence. She fancied she could hear Lord Bruce's deep voice, as he bent over Floris; fancied she could see her eyes alight with the new passion of love. Her heart beat wildly; her brain whirled; she put up her hand to her white brow, with a gesture of desperate resolve, and turned upon the man almost fiercely.

"Do what you promise, and claim what reward you will!" she breathed.

He let his arms fall to his side, as if he had anticipated the result, and his manner changed instantly from the cool, impassibility it had hitherto displayed, to an acute alertness.

"Your ladyship has decided wisely. As to reward—Yes. I shall claim it when the times comes."

Lady Blanche made her way back to the ballroom, and found her father yawning himself awake in one of the anterooms. When she declared that she was ready to go, the poor old earl quite brightened up with gratitude.

"Really! and the ball half over! 'Pon my word, you are growing sensible, Blanche. Lor! how I hate these affairs! If I had known what I should have to go through taking charge of you, Blanche, I should have married again, I should indeed!"

"Perhaps it would have been better if you had," she murmured, sadly, as she sank back into a corner of the carriage. Perhaps if her mother had lived, or some woman had taken her dead mother's place, she, Blanche, would not have fallen into the trap set for her by this stranger.

"Where is Bruce all the evening?" asked Lord Seymour, with an awful gape. "He hasn't been near me, and he usually comes and has a chat."

"I do not know. Do not speak to me of Bruce!" she said, bitterly.

The old man laughed.

"You and Bruce have quarreled again! Never mind, you will make it up again."

CHAPTER XI.

How time fled! Whether the band played square dances or round, whether she was on her head or her heels for the remainder of that night, Floris did not know.

She only knew that Bruce, her sweetheart—how pretty a word it is, though fashion has decreed it out of date—was continually at her side, whispering passionate love in her ears, pressing her hand, even venturing to kiss her hair when he could do so unobserved.

He would have danced all the remaining dances with her, if she would have allowed him, setting at defiance the fury of her engaged partners; but Floris insisted upon his going off and doing his duty elsewhere, and it was half with amusement, half delight, that she watched him going through the business of a waltz with some other young lady, with his eyes straying, wistfully, hungrily toward herself.

At last Lady Betty grew tired, not, however, before the ball was nearly over, and at the end of a waltz—during which Floris had been responding with "Yeses" and "Noes" to her partner's observations, without knowing in the least what he was talking about—she found herself, touched upon the arm by Lady Betty's fan, all the worse for wear by this time.

"I think we'll go now, my dear," she said, then she looked at Floris' face, radiant—say rather, softly glowing—with happiness, with a stare of astonishment. "By the way, how many times have you danced with Lord Norman?"

A crimson flush flooded Floris' face and she bent down to arrange her cloak.

"Oh, not many, Lady Pendleton," she replied.

"Oh, not many!" echoed Lady Betty, with a laugh. "Why, I have seen you dancing with him four times! No wonder Blanche went so early."

A spasm of pain ran through Floris' heart, but she fought against it. What did it matter, this coupling of his name with Lady Blanche's, while she, Floris, was his chosen love, his future wife? All the same, Lady Betty's bantering speech hurt her.

At the moment, however, she heard a voice at her elbow that dispelled all pain.

"Here you are!" he said "Going? So am I. Come on, Betty. Miss Carlisle let me put that cloak

closer around your neck," and his fingers strayed to her ear, and he pressed it carelessly.

"Look here, Betty, I'm fearfully hungry," he said, as they reached the hall and footmen were calling for Lady Pendleton's carriage. "Too hungry for grilled bones, which is all I should get at the club. Let me come home with you?"

"Will you?" exclaimed Lady Betty, delightfully. "But I'm afraid there won't be much to eat, Bruce."

"I don't care! I'll take my chance. I am hungry enough to eat anything—Miss Carlisle even!" and he pressed Floris' arm.

"That would be carrying your attentions a little too far, Bruce," said Lady Betty, mischievously. "Can you squeeze yourself in the brougham, do you think?"

"If I could unscrew my legs," he said, laughing. "I'll get up beside John," and he put them in, and climbed on the box.

The supper was laid in a very few minutes in the breakfast-room, that being, as Lady Betty remarked, the cosiest room in the house, and Lord Norman, with a lady on each arm, led them in.

"Edward has gone to bed!" cried Lady Betty. "His speech was a great success."

"Here's the premiership to him!" exclaimed Lord Norman, raising the champagne glass, his eyes alight with happiness as they rested on Floris' downcast face. "I wish everybody joy and success to-night," he added. "Betty, this is an admirable fowl, let me give you a wing. Flo—Miss Carlisle," with mock ceremony, "can I assist you to some more galatine? Betty, I think I shall stipulate for the future that you give us supper in this cosy little room after every outing."

"I shall be delighted, Bruce, if you will undertake to be always in this humor. What is the matter with you to-night? You are like a boy. You remind me of Bertie. By the way, where did he vanish to? Bruce, do you think you really ought to have any more champagne?" with mock gravity.

"I don't know. I am not sure that I ought," he retorted. "Champagne to a man in my frame of mind, Betty, is like oil on fire."

"What is the matter with you?" demanded Lady Betty staring at his handsome face, more joyous than she had seen it since he was a boy home for the holidays.

"Shall I tell you?" he said. "Shall I tell her, Miss Carlisle?" and he leaned across and smiled into Floris' eyes, which dropped instantly.

"Why do you ask her?" demanded Lady Betty. "How can it possibly concern her?"

He leaned back in his chair and laughed, not loudly, but with pure, unrestrained, mirthful happiness.

(To be continued.)

WORLD'S SMALLEST CHURCH. Can Accommodate as Many as Ten Worshippers.

The Roman church at Penon, a suburb of Mexico City, is the smallest in the world. In general appearance this tiny structure somewhat resembles the oldest Roman church in Mexico, in the capital city a large one. The Penon church can comfortably accommodate as many as ten worshippers. It contains a little altar before which the marriage ceremonies of the young people of the village are performed. There is hardly room for the bride and groom to stand before it side by side. The door into the church is so low that a man of ordinary height cannot enter without stooping. The roof is surmounted by two small steeples in which bells hang and are rung as regularly as the big bells in the great cathedrals. The total height of the Penon church, including the steeples, is not more than one-half that of the great door of the cathedral. The Penon church serves as the place of worship for the entire population of the little village. When the interior becomes crowded the parishioners patiently wait until some of the worshippers leave and there is room for them to enter.

SURE OF IT.

The irate parent presented himself before the culprits. "Young man," demanded he, with the utmost sternness, "have I caught you kissing my daughter?"

If by this he expected to plunge the young visitor into confusion, it must be confessed that the old gentleman was greatly mistaken, inasmuch as the young visitor evinced the greatest calmness.

"I hope, sir," he said, "there is no mistake about it. The lights are none too bright, and I would be much mortified to learn that, after all, I was kissing the housemaid."

About the Farm

HINTS FOR FIELD STACKING.

It is necessary to be thinking of the best and cheapest methods for handling the crop. The horse fork in the barn is certainly a very useful implement, one that saves much time and heavy work pitching.

Seldom is this great labor-saving device used when stacking in the fields. One is used in this way on the college farm with great success. It is made as follows: Take one long cedar pole similar to the ordinary telegraph pole; attach three long guy ropes or wire to the top, also the pulley and rope that is to be used for hauling the hay. Attach one end of the rope to a tree or firm post. Hitch the horse to the other end of the rope. The pole is now ready for hoisting. Care must be taken to have the hole dug in such a way as to keep the pole from going sideways when hoisting. In starting the stack the bottom should be four feet from the bottom of the pole. The top of the pole should be slanting sideways towards the centre of the stack, as it does not work as well as slanting two ways. When unloading the load should be outside the rope. Should the heavy forklifts of hay disturb the side of the stack stand a few boards against the side of the stack.

Another plan that is used with success, especially when round stacks are made, is the following: Take three long telegraph poles and fasten them at the top in such a way that they will give a few inches. Next make a shoe eight feet long of 4x6 scantling; attach one to the bottom of each pole. This will admit of a horse being hitched to each when moving to a new locality. When clear of the stack, I would advise attaching to poles a reasonable distance apart to keep them from falling. Two pulleys and a single rope with horse fork attached are all that are necessary for either stackers.—John Fixter, McDonald College.

CHANGE FEED GRADUALLY.

It is fundamentally sound to consult the tastes of animals when endeavoring to get them to eat and digest the greatest amount of feed, says the Breeder's Gazette.

It is not exact to say that it is a mistake to force an animal to acquire an appetite for certain foods. Most animals are not in their tastes, just as are people, and they are apt to sniff at new foods. Did you ever notice that farmer at a hotel, where a wide range of provender is offered, including advanced season delicacies which they cannot get at home, generally stick right close to ham and eggs? Appetite is much of a habit. Hence it is sound practice to change feed gradually. In preparing feeds for animals, however, it is certainly desirable to consult their appetites. Much difference of opinion has been expressed over the time to cut timothy for hay. Dean Waters, of the Missouri Agricultural College, submits the results of some very clever work on that point and clinches it with some convincing evidence recorded unconsciously by the animals themselves. Cattle do not care for woody, well-ripened hay when they can get that which is cut at an earlier stage, constitutes a very creditable bit of study of a disputed point.

POULTRY HINTS.

Clean the house daily. Remove the males from breeding pens.

Separate the growing cockerels from the pullets.

Feed the cockerels a little heavier than the pullets.

Now is a good time to get rid of the surplus old stock.

Better cull out all undesirable old stock so as to give more room to those to be held over during the winter.

Keep the drinking water in the coolest place possible. Sun will quickly affect the water.

See that the houses are properly ventilated at night. To compel fowls to roost in a close, filthy place is a good way to have unhealthy stock.

Cooling, non-fattening foods, plenty of shelter, well-ventilated houses, and cleanly within, should be the order of poultry keeping for the next ninety days.

It is best not to use trap nests, during the summer unless they can be looked after every half hour, or the hens may suffer from the confinement.