

Fighting Life's Battle;

OR, LADY BLANCHE'S BITTER PUNISHMENT

CHAPTER XIII.—(Cont'd)

Floris heard him speak, and looking around saw, to her amazement, the thin figure of Josine standing close up against the glass wall.

She was very pale, and her black eyes shone with a half-frightened, half-defiant glare for a moment, then drooped, as she made a respectful courtesy.

"What are you doing here?" asked Lord Norman, quietly.

"Pardon, milord," said Josine, glibly; "I have lost my way."

"Lost your way?" he said, in his grave, clear voice. "Where were you going, then?"

The question was so sudden that for a moment Josine was nonplused. She had expected Lord Norman would point to an open door in silence.

"To miladi's room, milord," she replied.

Lord Norman looked at her keenly.

"To the upper corridor! What are you doing here then?" he demanded.

Josine had gathered her wits by this time, and raised her eyes with a deprecatory glance.

"Pardon, milord. I had a letter for her ladyship, and hoped to get an opportunity of delivering it. Milord, a thousand pardons! I have dropped it!"

Lord Norman looked at her sternly in silence.

"Yes!" she exclaimed, under her breath, her eyes roving over the floor. "It is certain that I have dropped it."

"You had better go and find it," he said, pointing to the open door behind her. "Go through that door and you will find yourself in one of the passages to the hall; there are servants there who will direct you, as you know, and might have remembered! Do not, please, enter this part of the house unless you are requested to do so!"

"Yes, milord, certainly," she murmured, and with a drooping head and gait, eloquent of the deepest contrition and humility, she passed out.

They waited a little while longer, then Floris got up.

"Let us go in now," she said, falteringly; and she drew away from him to the drawing-room.

As she did so she saw something white lying on the ground at her feet, and pointed to it with her fan.

"What is that, Bruce?" she asked.

He stooped down and picked it up.

"It's a letter," he said, carrying it to the light; "and addressed to—"

"Lady Betty," she broke in. "Bruce, admit that you have done poor Josine an injustice."

He held the note up with the direction toward him.

"Admit that in your mind you have done me an injustice, if you please!" he retorted, smiling.

"This letter is addressed to the Lady Blanche Seymour!"

"To Lady Blanche Seymour!" echoed Floris. "What a strange coincidence that Josine should lose a letter for Lady Betty, and that you should find one on the spot addressed to Lady Blanche!"

"Isn't it?" he assented; then he looked at the address thoughtfully. "Strange!" he said. "The handwriting seems familiar to me, and yet I cannot remember whose it is."

Floris went and looked over his arm at the envelope.

"Why, it has not come through the post, Bruce," she said, then she laughed. "How dreadfully curious we are! It is awfully bad manners to examine another person's letters so minutely. Pray take it to her at once."

He put the letter in his pocket, still thoughtful.

"No, I can't remember; and yet the writing is as familiar to me as my own. Floris," suddenly, "do you think it was this note that girl had lost?"

"No; she said distinctly that it was for Lady Betty."

He shook his head.

"I mistrust that girl. Let us take it to Blanche."

A great German maestro was playing on the grand piano, a buzz of conversation filled the room, and at the farther end, surrounded by several men, they saw Lady Blanche.

She was sitting in a deep, high-backed chair, leaning indolently

back, her fan moving to and fro listlessly, and her eyes fixed on vacancy.

She might have been listening to the music, or to the man who was talking to her, or lost in her own thoughts; to Floris' mind she made a splendid picture of beauty conscious of its power, and Floris stopped Lord Norman by pressing his arm.

"How beautiful she is, Bruce!" she whispered.

"Eh? Oh! Blanche?—yes!"

"Very beautiful, I mean!" she said, with emphasis. "I think her the loveliest woman I have ever seen—no, no! you must not indulge in such silly flattery!" for he had whispered a word or two of a beauty that was sweeter to him than Lady Blanche's. "See how they hang upon her for a word or smile. If she were a queen she could not be more courted. If I were a man I should not be able to resist her."

He laughed softly.

He was so happy, so free from care, so entirely wrapped up in his passionate devotion to the beautiful girl on his arm, that he could afford to laugh at his fancy for Lady Blanche as a midsummer madness past and gone.

"Let us give her her note," he said.

They went up to the little group, and Lady Blanche raised her eyes and smiled up at them, a half-sleepy smile such as Cleopatra might have dwelt in as she lay on board her yacht surrounded by her slaves.

"I've something for you, Blanche," said Lord Norman.

"Yes?" opening her eyes wide and holding out her hand.

The little crowd looked on for a moment, then man by man cleared away, and the three were left together.

"What is it?" I am continually dropping my bracelets and things. Give it to me, Bruce."

"It is not a bracelet, Blanche," he said, and held out the letter.

She took it, glanced at it, shook her head.

"Who is from it? How did you come by it?"

Bruce pressed Floris' hand to prevent her speaking, and she stood silently looking down, while Lady Blanche held the letter daintily between her finger and thumb.

"How can I tell? Open it and see."

"May I?" with a glance at Floris.

"Yes, we are all curiosity," he said, smiling.

She raised her eyebrows.

"Will you promise to pay it for me if it should be a bill? Will you—"

She stopped suddenly, and the blood rose to her pale face, dying it a deep crimson, then left it paler than before.

Floris was astonished. Lord Bruce looked grave.

"Is it bad news, Blanche?" he asked.

She looked up at him steadily.

"Bad news! No! Why should you think that?" she asked, laughing softly. "It is a bill, and so exorbitant a one that it made me feel quite angry. I wish you had promised to pay it," and she let the paper fall into her lap, but so "carefully carelessly" that the blank side fell upward.

At that moment, with a final crash, the great maestro's performance came to an end; a murmur of applause broke out; there was a general movement—people always move about at the end of a piece of music or song, as if they had been listening patiently, instead of talking loudly as they invariably do—and some one spoke to Lord Norman, and drew his attention away from Lady Blanche.

When he looked around, a minute or two later, she had gone, and she did not appear again that evening.

In the privacy of her room, having locked the door, she took out the paper and read it again, and as she did so her lips grew pale and hard, and her brows knitted with the look of care and anxiety which Lady Betty had noticed.

"Will you meet me in the plantation by the bridge to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock?" ran the note.

There was no signature, but though Lord Norman had forgotten the handwriting, Lady Blanche had not. It was Oscar Raymond's.

With an inarticulate cry she drew herself to her full height, crushing the paper in her hand, almost as if

the writer were before her, and she could crush him with her scorn, and contempt, and defiance.

"He writes—he orders me—as if I were his slave!" she muttered, fiercely, between her teeth. "Oh, fool! fool! that I was, ever to have listened to him! And yet—and yet—if it can be done! Oh, how I hate her! If it can be done! If he can tear them assunder, I do not mind this humiliation, this disgrace! Her happiness mocks and maddens me! And it is for Bruce's sake, not for mine alone! He would tire of her in a month, while I—I know that I would keep his love for my life! Oh, love! love! to what depths am I dragged for your dear sake!"

The "plantation" was not a recent addition to the estate, for the first had been planted three generations back, and were grown high and large enough to form a little wood, that served as a cover for the game and made a pretty point in view from the house.

Lady Blanche knew the spot well and knew, too, why Oscar Raymond had chosen it.

From that point of the plantation which he had chosen, the whole of the road could be seen, and no one could come upon them unawares—at any rate, from the house.

Sir Joseph had formed a riding party for that morning, and Lady Blanche had promised to join it, but she sent down a message by her maid that she had a headache, and did not appear in the breakfast-room, in which breakfast was kept going from nine till noon, and which presented the appearance of a London restaurant from the number of people who dropped in at all times between those hours, and the continued moving to and fro of the servants.

At ten o'clock the riding party started, and Lady Blanche, having made inquiries, learned that Lord Norman had gone with it, but that Miss Carlisle had remained in the house with Lady Betty.

To know that they were separated for a few hours, brought a strange unreasoning feeling of relief, and almost accepting the fact as an omen of success, she dressed, and telling her maid that she was going to walk her headache off, made her way to the plantation.

She reached the bridge as the clock struck eleven, waited there for some minutes, then slowly strolled into the dense shade of the pines.

She had brought a book as an excuse for loitering, and with it open in her hand she sat down on a fallen tree and waited.

There was no sign of Oscar Raymond, and she had seen no one since she started, excepting an old laborer in a rough frieze coat, whom she had found busily engaged picking up sticks at the fringe of the plantation, and with a sigh of relief, as the clock chimed the half hour, she rose and closed her book intending to go home, when the old man in the frieze coat hobbled toward her, passed her a few steps, paused to gather some sticks and cones, and then hobbled back again and stood beside her looking up at her, with his hat in his hand and his reddish-gray locks streaming down his neck.

Lady Blanche had taken out her purse, when the old man put his hat on again and laughed.

At the sound of the laugh—the low, soft, mocking laugh—Lady Blanche started and turned crimson.

"Is it you?" she said.

"Yes," said Raymond, "and if your ladyship does not recognize me, I need not fear detection by any others here," and he peered up at her from his half-closed eyes, with a furtive smile.

"Why are you here? Was it necessary?" she asked, coldly.

"Quite," he said, "or depend upon it I should not have taken the journey. Things are working well for us, my lady! There could be no better scene for our little comedy than this. You will understand that when I unfold my plot!"

"Your plot? Then you are ready—"

"To strike!" he said, quietly, and with the smile of conscious power which had never failed to impress Lady Blanche. "But we had better come into the middle of the wood, my lady," and he hobbled in front of her.

Lady Blanche followed him until they had got well out of sight of the road, then he stopped, and, courteously motioning her to a bank, drew himself up to his full height and leaned against a tree.

"We need to be cautious, my lady," he said. "Last night my messenger was discovered by Lord Norman. He was suspicious—and no wonder. Your French women are bad tools; they are always so curious on their own account. That is Josine's own fault."

"It was Josine, then, who brought me this note?" she said, coldly.

"It was Josine who should have

About the Farm

SPRAYING POTATOES.

As is well known, both early and late blight on potatoes are much less prevalent in dry than in wet seasons. In the State of New York the season of 1908 was dry throughout, and late blight was practically unknown; nevertheless, the conclusion of the Experimental Station, Geneva, N. Y., is that even in dry years it pays to spray with poisoned Bordeaux. This conclusion was reached from observation, not only that of their own experiments, but also those of farmers in different parts of the states who joined with them in conducting experiments after the fashion of the experimental union at Guelph, Ont.

In the words of a report from the Geneva Station: "It is unwise to neglect spraying in dry seasons. Even when there is no blight, five or six sprayings should be made during the season. In dry weather the wounding of the leaves by bugs, flea beetles, and other insects, is more injurious than in wet weather. It is an established fact that through spraying at a proper time will lessen the damage done by flea beetles. If flea beetles are not at least partially checked by spraying with Bordeaux mixture, it is positive proof that the work has been done properly. With us the opinion is steadily growing that very few farmers spray thoroughly enough to secure the maximum profit from the operation. There seems to be little danger of overdoing the matter." There were gains of from 30 bushels and upwards per acre, even in the dry season of 1908, as a result of spraying with Bordeaux, compared with areas on which insecticides only were applied.

AN EFFECTIVE WEED DESTROYER.

With the introduction of improved spraying machinery and better methods of manufacture, sulphur of iron is coming more and more into use as an effective weed destroyer. Formerly when applied with a brush, any solution for the purpose would form in large drops, or in smaller drops which would form large ones and drop off. Now, with the improved sprayer which are available, a spray is made that settles down on the stems and leaves of the weed and stays there.

Many farmers do not realize the extent of damage done to crops by weeds. It is stated that every ton of dry matter produced on a field five hundred tons of water is taken from the soil and discharged into the air, water that is needed for the growth of the legitimate crop. It is clear then how important it is that the weeds be destroyed.

Where crop rotation is possible, weeds are not so much of a menace, but crop rotation, as a means of weed destruction, is not always possible on account of climatic and labor conditions. For instance, rotation calls for a money crop, and a manurial crop as well as a cleaning crop. The cleaning crop—corn, potatoes, beets, etc., cannot be used over great areas on account of labor and market conditions. So it appears that spraying must remain the only practical means of weed destruction for many years to come, or until our population increases to the point where our vast prairie lands are held as small farms, making crop rotation practicable.

Sulphate of iron is a by-product in the manufacture of wire and is put up for the market in conveni-

brought it, but she dropped it, and it was brought you by Lord Norman," he answered. "A dangerous episode, my lady! Her stupidity might have ruined us, and that would have been provoking, just as our plans are complete."

"Complete!" she repeated, turning very pale.

"Yes," he said, with a smile, and with a look of confidence that shone through the painted wrinkles on his face. "Yes, my little comedy is now ready for the stage, my little plot is prepared, and given a fair opportunity—which we must make—and average luck, I shall have my revenge, and you—well, you will have had your amusement!"

"Tell me!" she said, impatiently.

"With pleasure," he answered.

"Lady Blanche, before the week is out, Lord Norman and the young lady who stands between you—pardon! the young lady he loves—will be parted, and I shall come to you to claim my reward!"

(To be continued.)

ent-sized sacks like plasters, instead of coming in huge crystals as formerly.—American Farm Review.

DEHORNING CATTLE.

Rather than to cause cattle to suffer the tortures of pain by having their horns removed after they have attained their normal growth and owing to the fact that it is an advantage that an animal be dehorned in order to protect them from each other, it is advisable to prevent their horns from growing. This can be successfully done by clipping the hair off of the little knobs where the horns appear and carefully applying a dehorning preventative to a small surface not to exceed the size of a quarter of a dollar.

If on the other hand the horns have been allowed to grow and the owner thinks it best to remove same, it is advisable to place animal in a stanchion, carefully securing the head, then apply the dehorning shears far enough down into the head so as to remove enough of the horn to prevent any further growth. To prevent infection apply an antiseptic solution to the affected parts.—Dr. David Roberts.

DESTROYED THEIR WORKS.

Authors Who Have Been Ashamed of Their Productions.

Mr. Kipling wants to destroy one of his poems, and also the author of it. He was sitting in his garden one day, when a street organ struck up "The Absent-Minded Beggar," which he wrote about the time of the Boer War. Mr. Kipling was silent for a minute; then he turned to someone near.

"If it were not suicide," he remarked viciously, "I would kill the man who wrote that."

Sir Arthur Sullivan liked his own setting of the song no better. A lady persuaded him to play it, and when he had finished he swung round and asked abruptly, "Well, what do you think of it?"

She thought very little of it, but she hesitated to tell him so. Instead, she ventured to remark that the words were rather vulgar.

"So is the music," was the composer's comment.

Many famous people have done their best to destroy the works of their youth. The learned Bishop Thirlwell was one of these, and it is little wonder that in his later years the Bishop did his utmost to get hold of copies of his early work "Primitiae" and destroy them.

Another clergyman, the famous Dean Farrar, in his youth fell in love with a beautiful girl. In her honor he published a volume of very sentimental verse, but, alas! the lady jilted him. When he found his real affinity in his wife he tried hard to collect and suppress the book of poems; but copies were always turning up, and quotations made from it to tease him. It may have teased him, but it certainly had not the least effect on his wife.

On the other hand, Tennyson very nearly destroyed one of his most popular poems. Mr. Edward Rawnsley was sitting with the poet in his lodgings in London, while Tennyson was busy burning some old manuscripts. He picked up "The Brook," and was just on the point of throwing it into the fire.

"Stop! stop!" Mr. Rawnsley cried. "You mustn't burn that. It is one of the best things you have written."

"Is it?" said the poet quietly, and put it back.

SCANDALOUS CORPULENCE.

The late American commander, General Shafter, although a man of corpulence, had a deep dislike for fat soldiers.

"They're no use!" he would bluster in his tremendous basso. "They pant, they wheeze, they snort, they choke, they grunt, they groan, they waddle, they slouch through the world! Not a particle of good on earth, fat soldiers! Would not have one of 'em if I could help it!"

"Er—but—er—you would not exactly call yourself slight, would you, Colonel?" a major once asked Shafter after one of these outbursts.

"Slight? No!" Shafter thundered in reply. "I've been a fat old nuisance ever since the day I tipped the beam at over two hundred pounds, and then I ought to have been court-martialled and cashiered for outrageous and malicious adiposity, sir—for scandalous corpulence to the prejudice of military discipline!"

Dora—"And so you quarrelled?" Lottie—"Yes; and I returned all his presents. And what do you think he did?" "Something horrid, I'm sure." "He sent me half-a-dozen boxes of face powder, with a note explaining that he thought he had talon as much as that home on his coat since he first knew me."