

Fighting Life's Battle;

OR, LADY BLANCHE'S BITTER PUNISHMENT

CHAPTER XIV.—(Cont'd)

Floris closed the door and returned to her room.

As she did so she heard Lady Betty's voice raised complainingly, and glancing in at the dressing-room saw Josine standing with the hair brush in her hand a little distance from the table, her face pale and troubled, while Lady Betty was holding her head as if she had been suffering untold agonies.

"What is the matter?" asked Floris, gently.

"That is what I should like to know!" answered Lady Betty. Here has Josine been tearing my hair out by handfuls for the last quarter of an hour! I don't know what has come over her! She used to be so careful; and now—I declare she seems half idiotic! She doesn't hear one-half the words I speak to her!"

Floris glanced at the dark face, and met an appealing, pathetic look from the black eyes.

"Perhaps Josine is not well," she said, gently.

"Why doesn't she say so, then?" retorted Lady Betty. "If she isn't well why doesn't she go and lie down! But, she says she is quite well; that there is nothing the matter with her! I have asked her a dozen times in the course of today!"

Josine glanced at Floris, lowered her eyes and heaved a deep sigh.

"There!" exclaimed Lady Betty, "that is how she goes on! If she were not far too wise, and too old—the latter with a little vixenish flash at Josine—"I should say she was in love."

"Oh, miladi!" murmured the girl, but looking at Floris all the time.

"Well, then, if you are not ill and are not in love, what is the matter with you?" demanded Lady Betty, not unreasonably.

"I am truly sorry, miladi—"

"Sorry! So am I, and sore, too!" snapped Lady Betty, plaintively.

"There, try again, and for goodness' sake pay some attention to your work, or I shan't have any hair left!"

Floris stood for a moment looking at the girl.

She seemed to have something on her mind, to judge by her pale face and the anxious look in her eyes.

"Perhaps she is afraid that Lord Norman will tell Lady Betty about the letter, and her having made her way into the conservatory," she thought; so, as she turned to leave the room, she said, to reassure her:

"Oh, Josine, Lord Norman found the letter and gave it to Lady Seymour. Is that what you are uneasy about?"

Josine crimsoned, then her face went pale again.

"Thank you, miss," she said.

"What letter was that?" demanded Lady Betty.

"A letter one of the servants asked me to give to Lady Seymour, miladi," said Josine, glibly.

"Ham!" snapped Lady Betty. "Yes, that is the sort of work you are best fitted for. I should apply for the next postman's situation that may be vacant."

Floris wanted to ask if that was the letter Josine had lost, or if there was another for Lady Betty, but thought that she would reserve the inquiry for a more fitting time, and went to her room and began to dress herself.

As there was to be a dance that evening, she selected one of her prettiest dresses, and before she had got it on, Josine came softly in to help her.

Floris had accepted her assistance once or twice lately, and though she had never quite liked or believed in the girl, had, from pure good nature, grown to tolerate her. But this evening Josine's manner attracted her attention very much and puzzled her.

Every now and then the girl drew a long breath and sighed; and once or twice Floris happening to glance up at the glass, caught the black eyes fixed upon her with an expression that was almost one of absolute pity.

"Josine," she said at last, "I am sure that you are ill. Why do you not tell your mistress and ask her to let you go to bed—I will tell her if you do not like to. Go and lie down this evening and rest."

"Thank you, miss; thank you," Josine murmured. "You are always good and kind—"

"Oh, nonsense," said Floris, with a little smile.

"Ah, yes, miss, but it is always that you are good and kind to me, while I—I—"

She stopped and turned away, taking up a neat dress and carrying it to the wardrobe.

"While you, what?" asked Floris. "No matter, miss. It is not I who should speak," said Josine, shutting her lips tightly. "No, it is not I; a servant has no business with a heart! Ah, no, she must use her hands and her eyes, but her heart—as it is not fitting that she have one."

"I don't understand you in the least, Josine," said Floris, half puzzled and half amused. "If you are in any trouble, why not confide in Lady Pendleton? I am sure she will help you."

"I! No, it is not I; and miladi cannot help. No one can help!" said Josine, almost tragically, but with an air of quiet dignity that impressed Floris, though she tried to think lightly of the matter, putting the whole thing down in French sentiment.

"Well, I am sorry if you are in trouble, Josine," she said, "either on your own account or on any one else's; but you must not make yourself ill."

"Thank you, miss!" responded Josine, gratefully, and she knelt down and arranged the folds of Floris' dress with a careful, one would almost have said, seeing her, a loving attention.

Floris took up her fan and went downstairs with Lady Betty, and Josine stole on tiptoe to the door, and watched them as they passed below her.

"So! I am too old to be in love, miladi, am I?" she muttered, between her white teeth. "Perhaps, oh, yes, perhaps! But I am not too old to spoil the love-making of your sweet Miss Floris! I am wise enough for that! Wait, miladi! Wait, and you shall see!"

Then she stole back to the room, and taking the ring Lady Blanche had given her, held it to the candle-light.

"Oh, you beauty!" she murmured rapturously. "You beauty! And there are more coming to keep you company! More and more! And money, too! Bah! what fools these grand ladies are! And all for love! I wonder now," she murmured, musingly, "whether Miss Floris got an inkling of my meaning? These English are so dull! A Frenchwoman would have known in a moment that I had something to tell her. But she! Oh, no! It was, 'Josine, you must be ill! I shall have to sepak plainly, after all. Bah! It is as our friend in the wig says, 'a pretty little comedy!'"

CHAPTER XV.

All unconscious of the plot that was thickening, happily ignorant of the subtle net which was weaving to ensnare her, Floris went down to dinner as happy and lighthearted as a girl who has no trouble and a handsome sweetheart can be.

By some chance she fell to the arm of an elderly Scotch lord this evening, while Lady Blanche was consigned to Lord Norman.

Floris felt a little pang of disappointment, for she had, perhaps unreasonably, expected to have him by her side every night at dinner.

But the disappointment passed in a few minutes, for the old lord, delighted at having the prettiest woman in Ballyfoe at his side, made himself very agreeable, and kept Floris very much amused.

But for all her amusement she found time to glance at the other two now and then, and when she did so, she noticed that Lady Blanche seemed more animated than usual, and that Lord Norman appeared amused and entertained also.

His devotion to Lady Blanche, as the busybodies were styling it, was noticed by every one, and certainly, therefore, did not escape the keen eyes of Lady Betty.

But Floris, though she missed him sorely, did not feel injured or complain; and when Lady Betty made some remarks, she defended Lady Blanche and championed Lord Norman quite heroically.

"I don't see why a girl should think that she has a right to monopolize a man because he happens to be engaged to her," she said, with a little flush—her face had looked

rather pale and joyless all the day—"there will be plenty of monopoly on both sides after they are married."

"Ah, no doubt," said Lady Betty, dryly. "But Blanche seems to think that she can monopolize a man because she is not engaged to him. I don't think she has allowed Bruce to get away from her apron-strings for more than half an hour to-day—that is during the time he has been at home; and if that isn't monopoly I don't know what is."

A few minutes afterward Lord Norman came up to them. It was nearly bedtime, and the drawing room was thinning.

Lady Blanche had just gone upstairs, having kissed her hand to Lady Betty and Floris as she passed.

"Well?" he said, dropping into a seat between them. "Are you nearly tired? What a long evening it seems! I suppose it is after the exertion of last night. Floris, I have scarcely had a word with you all day," he added, wistfully.

Lady Betty laughed sarcastically. "Whose fault is that?"

He looked at her, with a half-puzzled smile. "I don't know. I don't seem to have had a minute to myself, which, of course, means a minute with Floris. And now they have arranged to go to Scarfross to-morrow. We shall be away two days, I am sorry to say."

"Two days?" said Floris, with a little moue. "Why, Bruce?"

"Too far to get back the same night, dearest!" he said. "I used to enjoy the expedition one time, but now, this autumn, I should give anything to be left at home. But that is impossible, I am sorry to say. The prince has asked me especially to go. Sir Joseph, with his usual forethought, has arranged that some of the young fellows should remain and take you ladies to the cascades for to-morrow, so that you will not miss us hunters."

"I don't think I should care much about the cascades," said Floris. She was feeling rather tired and listless, and the news that her sweetheart was going to leave her for two whole days—after devoting himself for the two previous ones to Lady Blanche—dispirited her.

"I suppose I can stay here!"

"I hope you will go," he said quickly, adding with an eagerness which, at the moment, she ascribed to his desire that she should be amused during his absence, but which afterward she read in another and a sadder light—"Yes, Floris, do go! I particularly wish you to! Sir Joseph has planned this little expedition mainly on your account, and would be disappointed if you did not go! Besides, what will you do in the house all day if you remain at home? Come, dearest, promise me that you will go!"

"I will go if you wish it, Bruce," she said, dutifully; "that is, if I do not feel very much disinclined," with a smile.

He took her hand and kissed it lovingly. "You will enjoy it, I am sure," he said. "Blanche is going!"

"Oh, then, I am sure we shall enjoy it," said Lady Betty, with fine sarcasm. "I think we had better go up now, my dear."

He followed them into the hall on his way to the smoking-room, and, there being no one there but themselves, took her in his arms and gave her her "good-night" kiss.

"We are off early in the morning, dearest," he said, "and I shall not see you before I go. Be happy while I am away, and I will bring you a set of antlers as a reward!"

Floris was tired and despondent; a heavy weight seemed to hang over her, and she felt so depressed that she went straight to her own room instead of going into Lady Betty's, and talking over the events of the evening as she usually did.

"I must have danced too much last night," she said to herself. "and am over tired. I shall feel better and brighter in the morning! But I wish Bruce was not going to be away for two whole days! How I shall miss him!"

With this thought and the sigh it occasioned she fell asleep. How long she had slept she did not know; but she was awakened by that consciousness which we have all of us felt at times, that some one was in the room.

She awoke instantly and raised herself on her elbow and looked around. A small lamp was burning on the table, and by its dim light she saw a woman kneeling beside the bed. It was Josine.

The girl had her head in her arms and was apparently crying in a subdued, sullen kind of way.

Floris was too startled and surprised to move for a moment, then she sat up and called to her softly. "Is that you, Josine?"

Josine raised her head, and showed a face,

pale and tear-bedewed, and fixed her black eyes with a piteous expression on Floris. "What is the matter? What are you doing here?"

Josine dropped her head in her hands again and emitted a low sob.

"Oh, mademoiselle, I cannot sleep! I cannot rest!" murmured Josine, with a little sob and gasp. "I am so very unhappy."

"There is something on my conscience, something that lies so heavy that I cannot rest night or day. Ah! mademoiselle, I would tell you but that I know you would ruin me!"

"I ruin you! What on earth do you mean?" said Floris. "Stop! I do not wish to hear anything you may have to say—"

"Then mademoiselle is lost!" exclaimed Josine, tragically, "and Lady Blanche will win the day."

Floris did not start or wince, as Josine had expected; she even smiled.

"Are you quite out of your mind, Josine?" she then asked, with calm stern dignity.

"Ah, mademoiselle takes it as I expected! It is hard to believe that a grand lady like Lady Blanche should descend so low as to try and steal another woman's lover! That is done often enough by people of a lower class, ah, yes! But by so grand a lady as Lady Blanche—ah, no it is impossible, it is ridiculous, is it not?" sarcastically.

"It is indeed!" said Floris, gravely, "and if it is only to vent this piece of spiteful impertinence you have intruded into my room at this hour, Josine—"

"Stop, mademoiselle! I am no fool! I did not expect you to believe me! Ah, no, not even when I said that I was in her confidence—"

"In Lady Blanche's confidence?"

"Yes, mademoiselle. It is not uncommon. I am the useful slave that acts as go-between for her ladyship and milord."

"My lord!" said Floris, white to the lips with anger. "Do you dare—"

"Ah, but yes, mademoiselle, I mean Milord Norman!"

Floris stared at her for a moment, then she sank on to a chair and laughed—actually laughed.

Josine watched her sullenly, but with a close keenness.

It was hard to breed suspicion in that sweet, pure mind, but Josine did not despair.

She had a strong suit to play, and had not played her best cards yet.

"Josine, I am now sure that you are out of your mind," said Floris, at last. "Please go away and let me go to bed and sleep. It is fortunate for you that I have promised not to repeat this farrago of nonsense, or you would have received your dismissal to-morrow morning. As it is, I must ask you not to approach or address me again, unless it is absolutely necessary. Go, now, if you please."

Josine sprang to her feet. "Mademoiselle believes that I lie! That I am deceiving her. Good! Mademoiselle shall see! Give me till to-morrow—no, to-day, and I will prove to her that Lord Norman is false to her! That it is Lady Blanche whom he loves and would wish to make his wife! Yes, mademoiselle shall see, shall hear for herself what I, Josine, already know. Mademoiselle thinks I lie! Yes, truly, and mademoiselle would tell me again that I lie if I say that Milord Norman and Lady Blanche are going to elope this very day!"

The blow was struck, and well struck, considering.

(To be continued.)

HIGH TEMPERATURE.

An extremely high temperature for a living human body was reported at a Belfast (Ireland) inquest. A boy of fourteen had his foot badly scalded through a kettle of boiling water overturning, and the lad died from blood poisoning. A doctor stated that when he first attended the boy his temperature was 105 degrees, and the following day it was 109.5 degrees. Death occurred half an hour after the temperature was taken. The coroner commented on the extraordinary figures, and the doctor said that he believed it was the highest temperature at which anyone had lived.

The sowing of a cover crop like crimson clover or mammoth red in the corn field at the time of the last cultivating is an entirely practical plan. If the ground has been well cultivated during the season, a good catch may be expected.

may not make much headway while the corn is shading the ground, but it progresses rapidly when the corn has completed growth during the cool autumn days. So far as the effect on the ground is concerned, in other words, considered from the cover crop viewpoint, clover would be much the best. For pasturage use either rape or rye. Rye should not be sown as early as clover.

About the Farm

SPRAY PUMP FOR FRUIT GROWING.

There was a time when the most beautiful specimens of apples, pears, peaches and other fruits could be grown with but little cultivation or attention of any kind. In those days, about forty years ago, no one had heard of a spray pump or the spraying of trees, plants and vines in order to destroy injurious insects. All the orcharder gardener or farmer had to do was to plant his trees or vines and nature would do the rest in the fertile soil of those earlier days.

At that time it was difficult to find a wormy apple, of late years insect pests have multiplied. The forests and bushy places have been cleared up, thus the natural food supply of the insects has been removed, and they naturally find a new supply in the orchards and vineyards which now cover so many of our healthful hillsides. The wholesale and unrestrained destruction of birds has had its effect, for many of the birds thrived on insects and larvae. Thus at this date no well-informed fruit grower feels that he can get along without a spray pump and cans or barrels of spray mixture.

The fruit grower watches his fruit trees, vines and plants through the winter months. When the branches are bare of leaves he can find the eggs of insects more readily and can destroy them more easily than at any other time. With one snip of his gloved hand he can destroy the eggs that would soon hatch into thousands of caterpillars. During winter he sprays his trees with lime and sulphur mixture or soluble oil solution to exterminate the San Jose scale if affected.

The active season for spraying begins in the spring just after the buds begin to swell, using the Bordeaux Mixture to destroy fungous germs upon the branches which, if the spraying was not done, might affect the fruit and the foliage. The next spraying on apple trees is given immediately after the trees have leafed out. Another poison spray is usually given two weeks later. If the trees are sprayed when in full blossom, myriads of honey bees will be destroyed and possibly some injury will be done to the fruit crop.

It is found that apple trees need more attention than cherry, plum and pear trees. Often the cherry does not need any spraying. Grapevines growing about your buildings or in your gardens may not be seriously attacked by insects, but they should be watched.

The first spraying after growth begins in the spring is given to the currant and gooseberry, which are often attacked by the currant worm, a pest about one-half inch long. These bushes must be watched carefully, for if not sprayed with a solution of Paris green and water, or dusted with powdered heliobore when the dew is on the leaves these worms will consume every leaf upon the bushes, destroying all hopes of fruit this season. These worms are easily killed if attacked when they first make their appearance.

It is hoped that these instructions will not frighten the reader who has not had much experience in fruit growing. There are thousands of people in every country who grow fruits on their home grounds who have never used any spraying device or spray solutions and yet these people have succeeded in growing fairly good specimens. There are sections of the country where trees are not seriously insected. But the truth remains, the nearest perfect yield is on the sprayed trees.

FARM NOTES.

Late potatoes will need careful cultivation and regular spraying now to keep down weeds, conserve moisture and head off blight. Remember it is too late to begin spraying after blight is started. The only safe thing is to keep the foliage covered with Bordeaux from start to finish.

Plant food is the united action of three substances, nitrogen, potash and phosphoric acid. Notice that it is their united action which constitutes plant food. Nitrogen alone cannot grow crops nor can nitrogen, and potash or nitrogen and phosphoric acid—all three are needed, working together. Further, these three substances must be soluble in the moisture of the soil.