Fighting Life's Battle;

OR, LADY BLANCHE'S BITTER PUNISHMENT

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was an awful ride which Lady Blanche had undertaken, and for the remainder of her life she remembered that night journey.

They reached the house, and at the sound of their approach, Sir Joseph came to the door. He started as his eyes fell on Lady Blanche, and he looked beyond her as if he expected to see some one else — Floris.

"Lady Blanche!" he said. "Have you come all this way——"

She fell rather than slipped from the saddle and caught his arm.

"Tell—tell me the truth!" she panted. "Is he——"

Her white face and suppressed emotion startled him.

"Lord Norman, thank Heaven, is alive!" he answered gravely.

Lady Blanche put her hands before her eyes and remained motionless for a moment, then she accepted Sir Joseph's arm and allowed him to lead her into the house.

"And you have ridden all this way in the dead of the night!" he said, scarcely yet realizing that it was really she who stood before him. "You must be wet through, Lady Blanche, and—and I am afraid there is no change of clothes; we have, unfortunately, no women-folk here."

She shook her head.

"It does not matter. No, I am not very wet. I do not care in the least. Sir Joseph, can I—can I see him? But of course, I can! I have come to nurse him."

Sir Joseph stared.

If any one should have come, it should have been Floris—the girl to whom he was engaged. His thought found expression.

"Have you told—how is Miss Carlisle? I trust the sad news has not made her ill?" he said.

Lady Blanche looked up wildly. She had almost forgotten Floris!

"We—we did not tell her," she said, coldly and distinctly. "We thought it better not to do so until—until we know how Lord Norman really was. This is why I have come."

Sir Joseph felt surprised.

"You have not told her?" he said gravely. "I am rather sorry, I think she ought to know. But perhaps she will follow with Lady Pendleton in the carriage?" he said.

"Perhaps so," assented Lady Blanche; "and now will you go and see if I may go to him, Sir Joseph? Dr. Greene may want me."

He went upstairs, and came down again after what seemed an age to her.

"Yes; Dr. Greene says you may see him; but he thinks you should have some rest."

She took off her hat and put it down with a gesture of refusal.

They entered the bedroom, and Lady Blanche, pressing her hand to her heart for a moment, unseen by Sir Joseph, glided to the bed. There lay Lord Norman, white to the lips—white as the bandage about his head, saving for the dark red scars on his forehead which the savage stag had caused.

Beside him stood Dr. Greene, and at a little distance the miserable boy whose inexperience and youthful impatience had been the cause of the accident.

Dr. Greene looked up as she approached, and scanned her face critically.

"Is—is he asleep?" she whispered, huskily.

"No," he said, aloud; "you need not be afraid to speak, Lady Blanche; he is quite unconscious, and will remain so, I am afraid for some time."

"Is he much hurt?" she asked, her eyes riveted on the white face.

"Very much," he said, concisely. "The stag did not spare him, poor fellow!"

"Is it dead!" she ground out between her teeth, with a sudden savage flash of her eyes.

"Is it—the stag? I do not know."

"Yes," murmured Lord Harry, miserably, from the other end of the room.

She did not hear him, but stood with her eyes fixed on the motionless face, while she drew off her gloves.

"Sir Joseph tells me you wish to help me, Lady Blanche," said Dr. Greene. "Do you not think you had better rest for a while? Your journey has been an extraordinary one for a lady to undergo."

She shook her head.

"I could not rest. Tell me what I am to do?"

He inclined his head, seeing that any further remonstrance would be useless.

"Keep his bandages moist, please," he said. "I am going downstairs to prepare fresh ones. Call me if he gives the slightest sign of returning consciousness."

As he left the room Lady Blanche sank on her kn es beside the bed, and let her head drop until her lips rested on Lord Norman's.

"Oh, my darling, my darling!" she breathed. "You will not die! You must not die! No, Bruce, Bruce, live for my sake! My darling, my darling!"

Lord Harry stared at her with his bloodshot eyes, and almost frightened by what he had seen, rose and stole out.

The morning broke, and the sun came sleepily through the mist, and the noon and evening passed, and still Lord Norman lay as dead to all around him, as if indeed life had passed the portals of his white lips; and still Lady Blanche knelt down by his side.

Toward nightfall the carriage from Ballyfloe arrived.

It contained Lady Pendleton and a nurse, but to Sir Joseph's amazement, no Floris came.

"Have you told Miss Carlisle?" he asked as he held Lady Betty's trembling hands, and tried to encourage her.

"No!" said Lady Betty, flushing and then turning pale again. "No; Miss Carlisle was summoned from Ballyfloe quite suddenly, before the news arrived!"

"Ah, that explains it!" he said, with a relieved air. "It is fortunate that it has happened so, though we may have to send for her. Now don't cry, Lady Betty. Dr Greene does not withhold all hope; and we have got an excellent nurse in Lady Blanche."

Lady Betty flushed again, but before she could speak the door opened and Lady Blanche glided in.

Sir Joseph, thinking that he would be in the way, left them, and the two women confronted each other.

"You have come, then," said Lady Blanche. "Where are the the things you have brought?"

"The nurse has them," said Lady Betty, coldly.

"The nurse!" echoed Lady Blanche. "Why did you bring one? I am the nurse, Lady Pendleton."

Lady Betty began to tremble.

"What right have you here?" she demanded. "Do you think Floris will be pleasel when she hears——"

"Floris, Floris! I am sick of the name!" said Lady Blanche, with a curl of the lips. "Listen to me!" and she came quite close to the agitated woman. "Floris Carlisle is not here, she will not come here. You know why, as well or better than I do. Do you think because she has jilted and deserted him, that I should do so, too? Wait! I have come down because I have something to say to you. Remember, please, that I am Lord Norman's relative; that I am nearer to him than any Floris, jilt or no jilt, and that it is I—I and no one else—who will tell him how she has deserted him! I will brook no interference from any one but Miss Carlisle, and do not expect to meet with any from her!" and, with a wave of the white hand, she swept noiselessly from the room.

The days passed; the little stone house, which had been built for pleasure, had become like a hospital.

On the evening of the fifth day, as Dr. Greene stood beside the window, looking out on the wild scene with a grave and anxious face, he heard Lady Blanche whisper his name, and turned noiselessly to the bed.

Lord Norman had opened his eyes and was looking at Lady Blanche with an expression of consciousness in them.

"Floris!" he breathed. Even then she did not speak, but her hand stole along the bedclothes and enclosed his hot, wasted one.

"Floris! You here? What has happened? Ah! I remember"—he added, with a faint effort at a smile. "Is—is the boy safe?"

"Lord Harry is all right," said Dr. Greene. "He has gone home."

"Poor boy! I am glad of that. I am very tired! How long have I been lying here? The whole day?"

Dr. Greene drew a silk handkerchief across the feverish eyes.

"Don't talk now, Norman," he said. "Try and sleep. We will tell you all about it in the morning."

With a gesture of obedience he turned his head on the pillow, his hand still on Blanche's.

All night Lady Blanche sat with his hand in hers—hers which he thought was Floris'!—and in the morning he awoke, with the fever left far behind.

"Why, Blanche," he said feebly; "you here? Where is Floris? Has she gone to lie down?"

She inclined her head.

"I am glad of that. Poor girl! She must need some rest, surely? She has been watching beside me all night, hasn't she?"

Lady Blanche smoothed the bedclothes.

"Don't talk yet, Norman," she said, huskily.

"Blanche, how long have I been lying here?"

"Six days, Norman," she faltered.

"Six days! Six—and Floris has been watching all the time! My poor darling!" and the tears — he was still fearfully weak and easily moved—rose to his eyes. "Six days unconscious! And, of course, you all thought I was going to die! Is she very ill, Blanche?"

Lady Blanche shook her head. She could not speak.

Every word he uttered went through her heart like a knife thrust.

"No? I am glad, glad, glad! But white and thin, Blanche, eh? Poor Floris! We must nurse her now, Blanche. My darling! Ah, Heaven, how I have longed to be able to speak to her! But though I knew she was here—though I knew she held my hand, and could feel her breath sometimes—I could not speak. I suppose I was half-unconscious, eh, Blanche?"

"Yes, dear?"

"Am I very much knocked about?"

She was silent.

"Oh, don't think I am anxious about my personal appearance," and he laughed weakly. "But am I too much knocked about to let her make it an excuse for putting off the wedding? I want to be married directly I can get about. Eh, Blanche?"

She nodded an assent and went on:

"Yes, she won't refuse now. A sick man mustn't be contradicted, that you know. How long has she been lying down? I wouldn't have her disturbed for the world, but I shall be so glad to see her. Doctor," turning his head, "do you think there is any fear of my going off my head again?"

"Not if we are careful not to excite you," said Dr. Greene, looking at Blanche, significantly.

Lord Norman laughed.

"Oh, you won't excite me," he said. "I have had enough in the way of excitement to outshine anything you can do in that line! I shall never forget seeing that mad boy rushing on to his death, as it seemed! Thank Heaven I was able to get up to his side in time! Poor boy! Gone home, has he? I must write to him as soon as I can—I'll get Floris to write to-day, and tell him I'm all right! When we are married he shall come and stay with us!"

He paused, for want of breath, then fixed his eyes on Lady Blanche's face.

"Blanche, you are a good girl! You have been helping Floris to nurse me, eh? It is just like you! You look pale and tired; you have overdone yourself. When Floris comes back I shall tell her to send you away for the whole day."

She found her voice at last.

"Yes," she said, almost inaudibly, "when Floris comes back I will go away and rest. But—but she is more tired than I am, Bruce; and the doctor has ordered her to keep to her room."

"My poor darling!" he murmured, fervently. "Go to her, Blanche, and give her my love, will you? And tell her she is not to come to me on any account until she is quite rested," he added, wistfully.

Lady Blanche rose and supported herself by a chair for a moment, then she found strength to creep out of the room.

Her punishment was almost heavier than she could bear.

(To be continued.)

Fancier—"This dog, madam, would be cheap at $100." Lady—"I would take him; but I'm afraid my husband might object." Fancier—"Madam, you can get another husband much easier than a dog like

On the Farm

WHEN THE COW FRESHENS.

We can see no objection to feeding a new milch cow a reasonable amount of grain. Of course right at the beginning of the lactation period care should be taken as to how much grain and what kind of feed is given, but the time to establish a milch flow is at the beginning of the lactation period and this must be done by right feeding. This requires a certain amount of concentrates in order to produce the most profitable results. If a cow does not get enough nourishment she will draw upon her body for a time. After the surplus body tissue or fat has been removed she will begin to shrink in her production, which, of course, is not profitable for the man that is milking her.

There is no objection to feeding roughage to a cow immediately after she receives her concentrates Most of the concentrates pass into the third and fourth stomachs very little of it reaching the first stomach, or the paunch. It is not well to water a horse immediately after eating, as it tends to move the feed from the stomach, but it is not so with the cow.

In some cases salt is added to the roughage to make it more palatable. This is done particularly with roughage that is of inferior qality. It is the general practice of dairymen, however, to add salt to the grain rather than to the roughage. Many feed it entirely separate.

Milking a cow up to the time of calving does not permanently impair her milking qualities. It is apt to affect the lactation immediately following such practice. It is better to let a cow have from 4 to 6 week's rest. She will usually do better and last longer under such treatment.—Hoard's Dairyman.

TYPE IN SHEEP.

In discussing the desirable qualities of sheep, less is generally said, and less importance appears to be attached to type than in the case of cattle, hogs, and some other classes of stock. There is evidently a wide variation among flock-owners as to the class of sheep, in respect of size, to breed, in order to produce prime mutton, and wool of good weight and quality. The tendency to give preference to size, over quality and constitution, is evident in the selection of sires made by many breeders, and we believe that, as a rule, this is a mistake. Size, when other qualities are equal, is desirable, but unless accompanied by width of chest, breadth of loin, masculine appearance of head and neck, strong legs, and thickness through the heart, all of which are indications of constitutional vigor, the probability of his proving a prepotent sire is slim. As a rule, in breeding sheep, as in most classes of stock, the medium-sized sire, strong in the points above mentioned, is the most successful sire in begetting uniformly typical progeny and improving the character of the flock or herd. The quality of the fleece is also important, and this should be of uniform texture over all parts of the body—fine, dense and lustrous, and its handling quality such as to give promise of desirable weight. As a rule, long legs are accompanied by a narrow chest, a slim neck and a weak loin, indicating hard feeding qualities and late maturity. And these undesirable feeding propensities will, to a considerable extent, be imparted to his progeny; while the medium-sized ram will be likely to impress his desirable type upon his off spring with much certainty. In purchasing a ram, care should be taken to secure a superior animal, even if the cost be greater than for an average sort, for, as a rule, the best is the cheapest, if bought within reasonable limits as to price.

CHARCOAL FOR HOGS.

It has been noticed that hogs, especially when kept in confinement, appear to have a craving for what might be called unnatural substances, and will eat greedily such substances as charcoal, rotten wood, ashes, mortar, etc. Some of these may not be good for the animals, but it is pretty certain that charcoal is a stomach corrective, and it is good practice to keep a stock on hand for this purpose Where there is plenty of timber near the farmer can readily prepare charcoal by burning wood under a cover of earth. Where timber is scarce and valuable, and where corn is grown for ripening charcoal may be made by partially burning the cobs. Make a pit, start a fire of wood in the bottom fill it with corncobs. and when they are half burned cover it over with something; or, in other words, smother it out. Then put the charred cobs in a self-feeder, or store them in a corner of the feed house, sprinkling some salt over it, and keep a low-sided box filled with it, so the hogs can eat it at will. If charcoal is not provided, keep constantly before the pigs a mixture of one part of sulphur and about ten of wood ashes. Some such condiment appears to be required by hogs, especially in winter, to prevent derangement of the stomach. Pigs that are outdoors in summer and have access to earth and vegetable matter have little need of other correctives.

THE DREADNOUGHTS.

What the Battleships of the Future are Like.

People who have been reading about the rapid progress which has been made in recent months in the conquest of the air do not realize that naval development is more than twice as rapid. The Dreadnought of to-day is the scrap-iron of to-morrow.

Britain invented the first Dreadnought. She was launched less than three years ago, at a cost of well over a million pounds.

To-day Britain has at least six ships of similar design, but which are as great an improvement on the first Dreadnought as she was on the types which preceded her, whilst Germany, America, Japan, and even Brazil have also "gone one better."

And now we hear that Captain Percy Scott has invented a means by which one man can fire a broadside of guns by electricity. Then there is the problem of wireless telegraphy, with which all British Dreadnoughts are now equipped, whilst a recording station has been established at the Admiralty itself, enabling the Sea Lords to correspond almost instantly with vessels far away at sea.

Another startling invention has been credited to the French. Recently secret experiments of great interest were conducted with a new 26-inch luminous shell which is likely to prove a valuable asset in time of war.

The new shell throws out a ray of light when it strikes. During a night-attack it will indicate the range of the enemy without exposing the firing warships to view by means of their searchlights.

Airships, too, are to play a great part in future naval warfare. Of the future of the aeroplane nothing at present is definitely known, but every Dreadnought of all the big nations which goes into action in the future will carry a complete "balloon section" consisting of a captive military balloon with a full staff.

This is rendered necessary by the fact that from a great height the sea is absolutely as clear as glass, enabling objects to be seen at a tremendous distance below the surface, thus enabling commanders not only to spot the enemy's battleships from afar, but also to obtain timely warning of the approach of submarines and other engines of destruction beneath the sea.

How will it end? When shall we get to the final chapter in naval construction? The answer probably is Never, so far as novel engines of war are concerned.

Already a well-known naval expert has declared that "the officer of the present era has an average of ten years in which either to clear out of the service or seek refuge in a lunatic asylum." The reason for this is that the result of every gun practice is to unnerve officers and men for twenty-four hours.

The back-blast of the guns is so violent and the concussion so prodigious that eyes swim, ears sing, the brain seems softly to seethe and limbs twitch for a long spell afterwards. If this is so already, what will it be like with the heavier guns which are now being evolved? — Pearson's Weekly.

CZAR'S PRIVATE ORCHESTRA.

It is not generally known, observes a Paris contemporary, that the Czar has a private orchestra, which on rare occasions appears in public. This orchestra, we are told, must not be confused with the Imperial Opera of St. Petersburg. The orchestra dates from the time of Alexander III. in 1883, who entrusted its formation to Major General Baron de Stackelberg, himself a composer and skillful musician. All the musicians, in addition to their wages, with board and lodging, are entitled on retirement to a pension