

Fighting Life's Battle;

OR, LADY BLANCHE'S BITTER PUNISHMENT

CHAPTER XXV.

"If I were asked which was the most beautiful month in the year," said a famous French traveler, "I should answer 'May,' and if you asked me where I could choose to spend it, I would say 'Florence.'"

It was May, a lovely, balmy, pleasantly smiling May, and Florence was looking at its best.

On one of the bridges, and leaning against the stonework and looking down at the river was a young girl.

She was dressed in mourning—not heavy crape, stiff and hideous, but of simple black merino, relieved by a touch of white lace or linen at the sleeves and throat.

It was a very lovely face even in that city of lovely faces, and the people had elected to call her, not by the name she had assumed, Lillian Wood, but "the pretty English lady!" and there were many who were pleased at winning a smile from her sweet, sad face as at drawing the copper coins from the grand people who rode lazily through the parks or crawled languidly along the quays.

Among the English at Florence it had been quite an amusement, during the long winter months, to guess at the history of the graceful English girl who was seen so often in her solitary walks about the city; but not one of the chatter boxes ever imagined for a moment that the girl who lived in the little house at the corner of the square, with the eccentric old Mrs. Sinclair and who was called Lillian Wood, was none other than Floris Carlisle, once so nearly Countess of Norman.

Floris had come to Florence in the beginning of the winter, with a heart that was too heavy, as Dante says, to ache much, and had found a quiet but not unfriendly welcome from the lady who engaged her.

Mrs. Sinclair was one of those eccentric people who permit themselves to be absorbed by an idea, and give up everything in life to the pursuit of it.

Mrs. Sinclair's great ambition was to write an exhaustive work on botany.

She was passionately fond of flowers, and had made them a study ever since she was a girl; but the book had not got itself written yet, though she was now an old woman with white hair and failing eyesight.

It was in consequence of this failing eyesight that she had advertised for a young girl to assist her, and she soon found that she had secured a treasure in Floris.

Floris' work was not difficult; for two hours in the morning and an hour in the evening she was occupied in making notes and copying extracts for the great work; the rest of the time was at her own disposal, and she disposed of it in learning Italian in the quietude of her own room, or wandering dreamily about the beautiful city.

To all intents and purposes, so completely was her present life divided from the old one that Floris Carlisle might indeed have been dead and Lillian Wood have sprung from her ashes.

Mrs. Sinclair had no friends besides the clergyman and the professor; no English newspaper ever entered the house; no tidings of the great world on the other side of the channel ever reached the Violet Villa, as it was called, and Floris knew nothing of Lord Norman's accident and illness, guessed nothing of the plot which Lady Blanche and Oscar Raymond had so skillfully woven and put into execution.

Slowly, dreamily, Floris crossed the bridge on this May evening, and reached the library. She stood talking to the librarian, to whom she was known, then she set off for home.

With her book under her arm she was walking quietly through a narrow street when, suddenly, there came upon the drowsy, shadowy silence the sound of men's voices raised in anger.

There was no one in the street excepting a couple of children at play in the road and a woman lolling at a door, and Floris was wondering whence the sound proceed-

ed when, from the house opposite which she was standing two men came out.

They came out hurriedly; the foremost one in silence, the other one vociferating in the sharp, excited Italian fashion.

Something in the appearance of the first man attracted Floris' attention, as she stepped back to allow them to pass she saw that he was an Englishman.

It almost seemed to her for the moment as if she had seen him before, and she looked at him with a quick, frightened pulsation of her heart.

He was particularly handsome, with a pair of dark flashing eyes, and all the manner of a young man, though his hair, cut close to the head, was grey—almost white—and his face close shaven.

It was a singularly striking face, and it affected Floris strangely; why, she did not know.

He did not see her, and would have walked past with a quick though not hurried step, but the man who followed him sprang forward and seized him by the arm.

The first man turned and faced him coolly enough, but with a glitter in his eyes that made Floris tremble.

"Well!" he said, in Italian, but with an English accent.

"You shall not go! Hear me! I say you shall not go!" said the man who held him, vehemently. "You—you English are all alike, you win our money and then, hou! you fly! Come back!"

"Thanks no!" said the Englishman, with a smile that was more exasperating in its cool sang froid than any verbal retort.

"You will not?" shouted the other, through his set teeth.

"Certainly not!" replied the Englishman. "Why should I? I have won your money; is that what you complain of? You have won enough of mine, my friend."

The Italian ground his teeth.

"You are a cheat!" he hissed.

The Englishman laughed.

"You ought to know a brother-artist when you see him, certainly," he retorted, quietly. "You are an authority on the subject whom I should not care to dispute."

"You mean—?" snarled the Italian.

"Just this, my friend—that if I had not cheated, as you call it, occasionally, I should have stood little chance against you who cheat always! Good-evening."

And with a simple movement he wrenched the man's hand from its frenzied clutch and turned away.

At the moment, while Floris was thanking her stars that the affair had ended and that she was free to go on her way, the Italian raised his hand, something gleamed brightly in the murky gaslight, the Englishman uttered a sharp cry, and fell and staggered up against the post of the doorway in which she hid.

Crying for help as loudly as she could, Floris knelt down beside him and raised his head.

The street, so silent a minute ago, seemed to start into life as if by magic, and a crowd gathered round the two figures—the prone man with his white face, and the kneeling girl with her gentle, pitying one.

In another moment the police came up, and Floris hurried home to tell the terrible story to Mrs. Sinclair.

Floris was sipping her tea an hour afterward, when the servant announced the clergyman.

He was a very old gentleman, very greatly respected and beloved by the English community in Florence, and a constant visitor at the Violet Villa.

"I am late this evening, dear madam," he said, after exchanging greetings. "But I was detained on my road hither by an accident. I was crossing the road by the hospital when the porter ran across and called me in. A man had been brought in who had been stabbed in the streets."

Floris started and put down her teacup.

"He was an Englishman, and that is why they sent for me, of

course. I found the poor fellow in the surgeon's hands, and very much exhausted. It appears that he was stabbed while coming out of a house in one of the streets off the square. I suspect it was a quarrel arising from some gambling transaction. His account of the affair was not very clear; indeed, he seemed anxious to hush the matter up, and was very reticent."

"Is he very badly wounded?" asked Floris in a slow voice.

"No, only slightly, not dangerously; at any rate he recovered very quickly and, strange to say, has left the hospital. They tried to persuade him to remain, but he resolutely declined and came out with me."

"Is it possible?" breathed Floris.

"He is an Englishman!" he said, as if that explained the man's obstinacy. "An Italian, now would have given in and laid there for a month. Poor fellow, I happen to know a great deal about him."

"Yes?" said Floris.

"Yes. He is a well-known man in Florence, and bears, I am sorry to say, too famous a character as a gambler. He came here, why, dear me, a few weeks before your arrival, my dear Miss Wood. A rich man it was reported, at any rate he seemed to be in possession of a large sum of money and, for a time lived in great style. He became a member of one of the fastest clubs here, and soon got himself known as a man who played continually and for large stakes. Then he disappeared for a time, and I heard that he had caught the fever. Perhaps that accounts for the change which I observed in him this evening; his hair, which was dark, has become almost grey, as is sometimes the case with young men with black hair. His name is Raymond, Oscar Raymond."

Floris turned the name over in her mind for fully a minute, but she could not recollect ever having heard it before.

She went upstairs to her room, and setting her lattice back, looked out to the city with its countless lights beaming like fireflies in the darkness; but it was not of Florence or the scene she had seen in the streets she was thinking; strangely unaccountably, her thoughts had travelled backward to Lord Norman, and more clearly than she had seen him for months past his face rose before her mental vision. And yet it did not occur to her that the face of the wounded man, Oscar Raymond, was like that of her lost lover.

Perhaps if Oscar Raymond's hair had been black and he had worn a moustache, the resemblance would have been too great to escape her notice, but in the six months of dissipation Oscar Raymond had altered and aged considerably, and it would have been impossible for him to repeat the comedy which had proved a tragedy for Floris Carlisle!

CHAPTER XXVI.

Three weeks passed and the routine of Floris' life went on unbroken like the daily round of a well-made clock, and she had almost "remembered to have forgotten" the incident of the gambling fray. She had so far forgotten it that she had resumed her old solitary wanderings about the city, and one afternoon was seated under the trees in the square with a book in her hand, and her eyes fixed on the emerald hills, when she became conscious that some one was standing beside her.

She awoke from her reverie with a start, and was startled to see the Englishman she had last seen lying on the cold stones, standing quietly at her elbow.

He raised his hat as she looked up, and his dark eyes met her startled gaze with a calm but earnest appeal in them.

"Do not be alarmed, I beg of you," he said, in a soft grave voice.

"I fear that I have startled you?"

"No—a little perhaps," said Floris, looking up at him slowly.

She noticed as she did so that his face was more pale and haggard than when she had first seen

him, and that his left hand was thrust in the fold of his coat.

"This is the second time I have been unfortunate enough to alarm you," he said, gently, and with a touch of genuine self-reproach and regret in his voice. "I beg you to forgive me."

"There is nothing to forgive," said Floris, calmly.

"Yes, there is a great deal," he said, gravely. "I have not forgotten"—he stopped, as if uncertain how to proceed, then went on after a pause—"I fear I must have been the cause of great uneasiness and alarm to you. I wish that my friend had made his rash attempt half an hour sooner or later."

(To be continued.)

On the Farm

THE DAIRY AND SYSTEM.

System means more money. In the business world it is now being perfected in practice. Those colossal money-makers—the big trusts—are built on system. In America, patentees of devices that will save even one minute daily become rich, so greatly is time valued. We in New Zealand have not yet attained to America's business development, but even here method in every business is fast developing, says the New Zealand Dairyman.

System of the Dairy—In the farming business, as in every other, systematic working means more money. Many farmers do not regard their time as worth so much money—at least in practice. Few of them could tell one, off hand, exactly how much their farm returned them in any particular year.

In the daily round are many things that could be improved. For instance, during the autumn, as the milking cows decrease, more time should be left and one or more milkers might be spared from the pails for other work. It is noticeable, however, that, instead of early rising being continued in this season, frequently the bed still holds its occupant at 7.00 a.m. Consequently, the milking does not start until 7.30 a.m., and instead of one or more milkers being spared for other and necessary work, all hands go to the pails. There, relieved of the urgent need of haste, they take nearly as long to milk the herd as in the summer. So that it sometimes happens that, where a creamery has a score of suppliers, not one of them brings his milk before eight o'clock. By the time the cart is back, the cans washed, the shed cleaned and the manure spread the morning has flown.

A Time Table—There can be no question that early rising pays. Most dairymen will admit that to rise an hour earlier than is their custom seems like having two hours added to their working day. The morning hours are worth twice as much as are the afternoon ones. These immediately preceding remarks may appear platitudes, but they are worthy of repetition, and they illustrate my point.

Suppose the farmer had a time

table arranged on a slate (so that items could be easily erased). The following time table is suggested to serve from the beginning of June (in any year) until the end of August.

Time Table—Six a.m., men rise; 6.30 to 7.30 a.m. feed and harness horses, and milk; 7.30 a.m., breakfast; 8 a.m. dairy hands (two) on the return of cart, feed calves and pigs (if any) and wash cans and buckets; 8 a.m. to 12 noon, agricultural hands commence regular work; 9.30 a.m. to 11 a.m., one dairy hand to clean pails, cart and spread manure, the other to assist or chop wood and assist in field work; 12 noon to 1 o'clock, general dinner hour; 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., field or (agricultural) hands continue work; 1 p.m. to 3.30 dairy hands assist field hands, when one goes for the cows; 4 p.m., two dairy hands (it is assumed that very few cows need milking in these months) milk cows and afterward do odd jobs; 5 p.m., field hands cease work, unharness and cover horses; 5.30 p.m., tea.

This time table is not recommended as a hard and fast code, but rather, as a "ground plan" of work. Where the dairy herd is larger, the tilling practically nil, and the family (or hands) small, and where a milking machine is used it cannot be applied in its entirety. But with modification to suit cases, it should prove an all-helpful time table. The author's aim in it is: To economize time, to order everything on the farm, and to get the utmost amount done without strain. The details of the morrow's work should be filled in by the farmer on the night before, so that the work of the next day is planned and can be started without delay.

FORTUNE BY ENLISTING.

Recruiting officials at Naples have discovered that a poor young peasant who had been enlisted is the son of Signora Esther Baldini, a wealthy lady who entrusted her child to a nurse, lost him, and had been searching for him for twenty years. The young man is now heir to \$1,000,000.

LEVEL.

"Tryin' to rise too fas' in life is tiresome uphill work," said Uncle Eben. "Loafin' will send you speedin' down de toboggan whah, you'll finish wif a bump. De bes' way is jes' to go ahaid an' be on de level."

SEEMED LONGER.

"On our wedding day ten years ago," began Flatley, "I—"

"Why, John," interrupted his wife, "we have only been married three years."

"Well," he replied, "it seems like ten to me."

A COLLECTOR.

Minister—"My dear little boy, why don't you get an umbrella?"

Jakey—"Since pa has stopped going to church he never brings home any more umbrellas."

Printed musical notes were first used about 1464.

Ten to one it's your own fault if luck is against you.

Good advice is the kind you remember too late that you forget to take.

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As this very remarkable preparation is now called, is the greatest Constitutional Remedy ever known for Brood Mares, Colts, Stallions and all other horses; also Distemper among Dogs and Sheep. This compound is made of the purest ingredients and not an atom of poisonous or injurious nature enters into its composition. Many persons are now taking SPOHN'S for La Grippe, Colds, Coughs, Kidney Trouble, etc., and it is always safe. It expels the Disease Germs from the body; acts directly on the Blood and Glands. SPOHN'S is now sold by nearly every druggist and harness dealer in the land, and any can get it for you. Fifty cents and \$1.00 a bottle, and \$6.00 and \$11.00 the dozen.

Record of Annual Sales.

1st Year	1,053	Bottles Sold
2nd Year	4,364	" "
3rd Year	9,256	" "
4th Year	19,150	" "
5th Year	40,284	" "
6th Year	72,380	" "
7th Year	100,582	" "
8th Year	124,500	" "
9th Year	172,488	" "
10th Year	221,760	" "
11th Year	287,620	" "
12th Year	378,962	" "
13th Year	508,720	" "
14th Year	548,260	" "
15th Year	607,354	" "

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