A Foolish Young Man;

Or, the Belle of the Season.

CHAPTER XVII.—(Continued).

"I saw you both when you stood opposite each other after the carriage accident," she said, coolly. "I am not blind, and I am not particularly stupid. It didn't strike me at the time that there had been anything wrong between you, but I have since seen you look at Sir Stephen, and—you have an expressive face sometimes, oh, my father!"

He grinned sourly.

"You appear to keep your eyes open, Maude. Yes; there was a row between us, and there was a grudge——"

—"Which you mean to pay off?" she said, as impassively as if they were speaking of the merest trivialities.

"Which I could pay off—gratify, if I liked," he admitted.

"How?" she asked.

He did not reply, but glanced at her sideways and bit at the cigar which he had stopped to light.

"Shall I tell you, if I were a man and I wanted revenge upon such a man as Sir Stephen Orme, what I should do, father?" she asked, in a low voice, and looking straight before her as if she were meditating.

"You can if you like. What would you do?" he replied, with a touch of sarcastic amusement.

She looked round her and over her shoulder. The windows near them were closed, Stafford, with his cigarette, was too far off to overhear them.

"If I were a man, rich and powerful as you are, and I owed another a grudge, I would not rest night or day until I had got him into my power. Whether I meant to exact my revenge or not, I would wait and work, and scheme, and plot, until I had him at my mercy, so that I could say: 'See, now, you got the better of me once, you played me false once, but it is my turn now.' He should sue for mercy, and I would grant it—or refuse it—as it pleased me; but he should feel that he was in my power; that my hand was finer than his, my strength greater!"

He shot a glance at her, and his great rugged face grew lined, and stern.

"Where did you get those ideas? Why do you talk to me like this?" he muttered, with surprise and some suspicion.

"I am not a child," she said, languidly. "And I have been living with you for some time now. Sir Stephen Orme is a great man, is surrounded by great and famous people, while you, with all your money, are"—she shrugged her shoulders—"well, just nobody."

His face grew dark. She was playing on him as a musician plays on an instrument with which he is completely familiar.

"What do you mean?" he muttered.

"If I were a man, in your place, I would have the great Sir Stephen at my feet, to make or to break as I pleased. I would never rest until I could be able to say: 'You're a great man in the world's eyes, but I am your master; you are my puppet, and you have to dance to my music, whether the tune be a dead march or a jig.' That is what I should do if I were a man; but I am only a girl, and it seems to me nowadays that men have more of the woman in them than we have."

He stopped and stared at her in the moonlight, a dark frown on his face, his eyes heavy with doubt and suspicion.

"Look here, my girl," he said, "you are showing up in a new light to-night. You are talking as you mother used to talk. And you aren't doing it without a purpose. What is it? What grudge can you, a mere girl who has only known him for a couple of days, have against Sir Stephen?"

She smiled.

"Let us say that I am only concerned for my father's wounded pride and honor," she said. "Or let us say that I have a game of my own to play, and that I am asking you to help me while you gratify your own desire for revenge. Will you help me?"

"Tell me—tell me what your game is. Good gracious!"—with a scowl. "Fancy you having a game: it's—it's ridiculous!"

"Almost as ridiculous as calling me a girl and expecting to see me playing with a doll or a hoop," she returned, calmly. "But you needn't reply. I can see you mean to do it, like a good and indulgent father; and some day, perhaps soon, I will, like a good and dutiful daughter, tell you why I wanted you to do it. Is that you, Mr. Orme? Will I come and sing? Oh, yes, if you wish it. Where is the little dog?" she asked, looking up at him with a new expression in her langorous eyes, as she glided beside him.

"Asleep on my bed," replied Stafford, with a laugh. "My man has turned him off and made him a luxurious couch with cushions three or four times, but he would persist on getting on again, so he'll have to stay, I suppose?"

"Are you always so good-natured?" she asked, in a low voice. "Or do you reserve all your tenderness of heart for dogs and horses—as Mr. Howard declares?"

"Mr. Howard is too often an ass," remarked Stafford, with a smile.

"You shall choose your song, as a reward for your exertions this afternoon," she said, as he led her to the piano.

Most of the men in the crowd waiting eagerly for the exquisite voice would have been moved to the heart's core by her tone and the expression in her usually cold eyes, but Stafford was clothed in the armor of his great love, and only inclined his head.

"Thanks: anything you like," he said, with the proper amount of gratitude.

She shot a glance at him and sank into the music-seat languidly. But a moment afterwards, as if she could not help herself, she was singing a Tuscan love song, with a subdued passion which thrilled even the blase audience clustered round her. It thrilled Stafford; but only with the desire to be near Ida. A desire that became irresistible; and when she had finished he left the room, caught up his hat and overcoat and went out of the house.

As he did so, Mr. Falconer walked past him into the smoking-room. Mr. Griffenberg was alone there, seated in a big arm-chair with a cigar as black as a hat and as long as a penholder.

Falconer wheeled a chair up to him, and, in his blunt fashion, said:

"You are in this railway scheme of Orme's, Griffenberg?"

Mr. Griffenberg nodded.

"And you?"

"Yes," said Falconer, succinctly. "I am joining. I suppose it's all right; Orme will be able to carry it through?"

Griffenberg emitted a thick cloud of smoke.

"It will try him a bit. It's a question of capital—big capital. I'm helping him: got his Oriental shares as cover. A bit awkward for me, for I'm rather pushed just now—that State loan, you know."

Falconer nodded.

"I know. See here: I'll take those shares from you, if you like, and if you'll say nothing about it."

Mr. Griffenberg eyed his companion's rugged face keenly.

"What for?" he asked.

Mr. Falconer smiled.

"That's my business," he said. "The only thing that matters to you is, that by taking the shares off your hands I shall be doing you a service."

"That's true: you shall have 'em," said Mr. Griffenberg; "but I warn you it's a heavy lot."

"You shall have a cheque to-morrow," said Mr. Falconer. "Where did you get that cigar: it takes my fancy?"

Mr. Griffenberg produced his cigar-case with alacrity: he liked Mr. Falconer's way of doing business.

At the mom nt Stafford left the Villa, Ida was standing by the window in the drawing-room of Heron Hall. On the table beside her lay a book which she had thrown down with a gesture of impatience. She was too restless to read, or to work; and the intense quietude of the great house weighed upon her with the weight of a tomb.

All day, since she had left Stafford, his words of passionate love had haunted her. They sang in her ears even as she spoke to her father, or Jessie, or the dogs who followed her about with wistful eyes as if they were asking her what ailed her, and as if they would help her.

He loved her! She had said it to herself a thousand times all through the long afternoon, the dragging evening. He loved her. It was so strange, so incredible. They had only met three or four times; they had said so little to each other. Why, she could remember almost every word. He loved her, had knelt to her, he had told her so in passionate words, with looks which made her heart tremble, her breath come fast as she recalled them. That is, he wanted her to be his wife, to give herself to him, to be with him always, never to leave him.

The strangeness, the suddenness of the thing overwhelmed her so that she could not think of it calmly. He had asked her to think of it, to decide, to give him an answer. Why could she not? She had always, hitherto, known her own mind. If anyone had asked her a question about the estate about the farm, she had known what to answer, important as the question might have been. But now she seemed as if her mind were paralysed, as if she could not decide. Was it because she had never thought of love: because she had never dreamt that anyone would love her so much as to want to have her by his side for all his life?

As she looked through the window at the moonlight on the lawn, she thought of him; called up the vision of his tall, graceful figure and handsome face—yes; he was handsome, she knew. But she had scarcely given a thought to his face; and only felt that it was good to have him near her, to hear his talk in his deep voice, broken sometimes by the short laugh which sounded almost boyish. It had been good to have him near her—But then, she had been so lonely, had seen so few men—scarcely any at all—Suppose when she met him next time, she said "No," told him that she could not love him, and he went away, leaving her for ever; would she be sorry?

She turned away from the window suddenly, nearly stumbling over Donald, who was lying at her feet, his nose on his paws, his great eyes fixed sadly and speculatively on her face, and caught up the book. But his face came between her and the page, and she put the book down and went into the hall.

Her father was in the library, there was no sound in the house to drown the voice, the passionately pleading voice which rang in her ears.

"I must go out," she said. "I shall be able to think in the air, shall be able to decide."

She caught up a shawl and flung it carelessly over her head, quite unconscious that the fleecy, rose-colored wool made an exquisite frame for the girlish loveliness of her face, and opening the door, went slowly down the broken, lichen-covered steps, the two dogs following at her heels.

She drew in the keen but balmy air with a long breath, and looked up at the moon, now a yellow crescent in the starry sky; and something in the beauty of the night, something subtly novel thrilled her with a strange sense of throbbing, pulsing joy and happiness, underneath which lurked as subtle a fear and dread, the fear and dread of those who stand upon the threshold of the unknown; who, in passing that threshold, enter a world of strange things which they never more may leave.

Love: what was it? Did she feel it? Oh, if she could only tell! What should she say to him when she met him: and when should she meet him? Perhaps he had come to regret his avowal to her, had been wearied and disappointed by her coldness and would not come again!

At the thought her heart contracted as if at the touch of an icy hand. But the next moment it leapt with a suffocating sense of mystery, of half-fearful joy, for she saw him coming across the lawn to her, and heard her name, spoken as it had never yet been spoken excepting by him; and she stood, still as a statue, as he held out his hand and, looking into her eyes, murmured her name again:

"Ida!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Ida!"

It was the lover's cry of appeal, the prayer for love uttered by the heart that loves passionately; and it went straight to her own heart. She put out her hand, and he took it and held it in both his.

"I have come for your answer," he said in the low voice that thrills; the voice which says so much more than the mere words. "I could not wait—I tried to keep away from you until to-morrow; but it was of no use. I am here, you see, and I want your answer. Don't tell me it is 'No!' Trust me, Ida—trust to my love for you. I will devote my life to trying to make you happy. Ah, but you know! What is your answer? Have you thought—you promised me you would think?"

"I have thought," she said, at last. "I have thought of nothing else—I wanted to tell you the truth—to tell you truly as I would to myself—but it is so hard to know—— Sometimes when I think that you may go away, and that I may not see you again, my heart sinks, and I feel, oh, so wretched."

He waited for no more, but caught her to him, and as she lay in his arms only slightly struggling, her face upturned, he bent his own, almost white with passion, and kissed her on the lips, and not once only. The blood rushed to her face, her bosom rose and fell, and, her face grown pale again, her eyes gazed up into his half fiercely, half appealingly; then suddenly, they grew moist, as if with tears, her lips quivered, and from them came, as if involuntarily, the words of surrender, the maiden confession:

"I love you!"

He uttered a low, sharp cry, the expression of his heart's delight, his soul's triumph.

"You love me! Ida! How—how do you know—when?"

She shook her head and sighed, as she pressed her cheek against his breast.

"I don't know. It was just now—the moment when you kissed me. Then it came to me suddenly—the knowledge—the truth. It was as if a flash of light had revealed it to me. Oh, yes, I love you. I wish—almost I wish that I did not, for—it hurts me!"

She pressed her hand to her heart and gazed up at him with the wonder of a child who is meeting its first experience of the strange commingling of pain and joy. He raised her in his arms until her face was against his.

"I know—dearest," he said, almost in a whisper. "It is love—it is always so, I think. My heart is aching with longing for you, and yet I am happy—how happy! And you? Tell me, Ida?"

"Yes, I am happy," she breathed, with a deep sigh, as she nestled still closer to him. "It is all so strange—so unreal!"

"Not unreal, dearest," he said, as they walked under the trees, her head against his shoulder, his arm round her waist and supporting her. "It is real enough, this love of mine—which will last me till my death, I know; and yours?"

She gazed straight before her dreamily.

"There can be no heaven without you, without your love," she answered, with a solemn note in her sweet voice.

He pressed her to him.

"And you have thought it all out. You have realized that you will be my wife—my very own."

"Yes," she said. "I know now. I know that I am giving you myself, that I am placing all my life in your hands."

"God help me to guard it and make it happy!" he said; then he laughed. "I have no fear! I will make you happy, Ida! I—I feel that I shall. Do you understand what I mean? I feel as if I had been set apart, chosen from all the millions of men, to love you and cherish you and make you happy! And you, Ida?"

She looked up at him with the same far-away, dreamy expression in her wonderful eyes.

"Now at this moment I felt that I, too, have been set apart for you: is it because you have just said the same? No, because I felt it when you kissed me just now. Ah, I am glad you did it! If you had not I might not have known that I loved you, I might have let you go for ever, thinking that I did not care. It was your kiss that opened my heart to me and showed me——"

He bent over her until his lips nearly touched hers.

"Kiss me in return—of your own accord, Ida! But once, if you will; but kiss me!"

Without a blush, solemnly as if it were a sacrament, she raised her head and kissed him on the lips.

There fell a silence. The world around them, in the soft shimmer of the crescent moon, became an enchanted region, the land that never was on earth or sea, the land of love, in which all that dwell therein move in the glamor of the sacred Fire of Love.

Stafford broke it at last. It is the man who cannot be contented with silence; he thirsts for his mistress's voice.

"Dearest, what shall I do? You must tell me," he said, as if he had been thinking. "I will do whatever you wish, whatever you think best. I've a strong suspicion that you're the cleverer of us: that you've got more brains in this sweet little finger of yours than I've got in my clumsy head——"

She laughed softly and looked at the head which he had libelled, the shapely head with its close-cut hair which, sliding her hand up, she touched caressingly.

"Shall I come to your father to-morrow, Ida? I will ride over after breakfast—before, if you like; if I had my way I'd patrol up and down here all night until it was a decent time to call upon him."

She nestled a little closer to him, and her brows came level with sudden gravity and doubt.

"My father! I had not thought of him—of what he would say—do. But I know! He—he will be very angry," she said, in a low voice.

"Will he? Why?" Stafford asked. "Of course I know I'm not worthy of you, Ida; no living man is!"

"Not worthy!"

She smiled at him with the woman's worship already dawning in her deep grey eyes.

"It is I who am not worthy. Why, think! I am only an inexperienced girl—living the life of a farmer's daughter. We are very poor—oh, you do not know how poor! We are almost as poor as the smallest tenant, though we live in this big house, and are still regarded as great people—the Herons of Herondale."

"That's one of the things I have been thinking of," said Stafford. "What lovely hair you have, Ida! It is not often that dark hair is so soft, is it?"

He bent down and drew a lock, which his caresses had released, across her lips, and kissed her through it.

(To be continued.)

AGED U.S. SENATOR.

Senator Isaac Stephenson Is Canadian Born.

"I have no specific rules on longevity to offer," said United States Senator Isaac Stephenson on the 18th of June, when he was 85 years old. "I believe my long life and good health is due to the fact that so much of my youth was spent in the open. Many is the time I've slept on the snow in the woods. Just think right and live right, and spend as much of your time in the out-of-door world as you can and you'll be as young as I am at 85. Why, I don't feel a day older than I did the day I was 20."

By reason of strength this tall slender man has reached more than four-score years, and his boast is that he has worked hard ever since he was a small boy in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

According to Senator Stephenson it is the idler who will be cut off years before the allotted span of three-score years and ten, given an even chance with the man who works.

"Work is the greatest blessing on earth," he repeated, "work, and the open air!"

Also Richest Man.

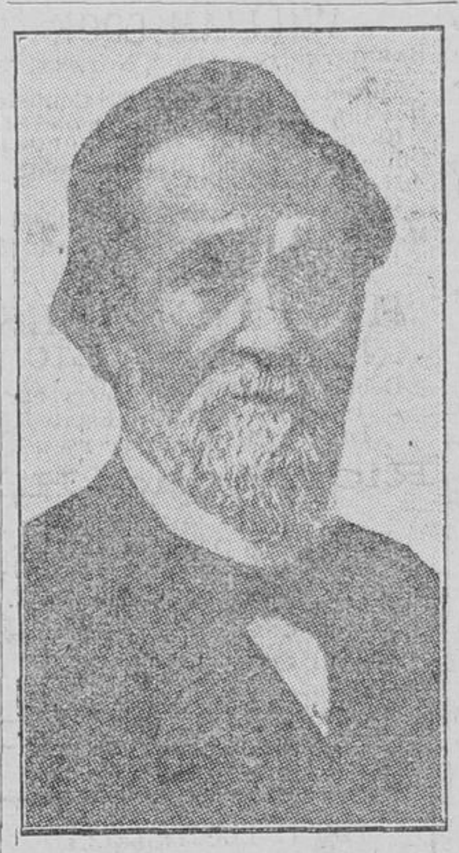
The oldest man in Congress is also the richest, and he carries the responsibility of one distinction as simply and naturally as the other. It is a far cry from the boy in New Brunswick, who canoed up the St. John's River on a logging trip when he was 11 years old, to the United States Senator from Wisconsin, who, when he was 84, fumbled a check for $7,000,000 in his fingers.

"I've just sold a little lumber," he said to the Senator across the aisle. And that was only one of many checks made payable to Uncle Ike Stephenson in the seventy-three years since he began work in a lumber camp.

Senator Stephenson lives on a farm at Marinette, Wis., where his chief enjoyment is his horses and cows, Percherons and Holsteins. Whereas he takes pride and delight in his horses and has for more than fifty years, he confesses to an ever-increasing fondness and admiration for the gentle, placid cow.

He says that the cow is a philosophical animal, practicing patience and calmness in a way that is soothing to behold, and that should be a perpetual lesson to all mankind.

Perhaps it is because as, he insists, the cow has a really beautiful personality that he gives each one



Senator Stephenson.

of the kine he loves best a friendly, familiar name, the most distinguished of which is Pauline. She was presented to President Taft and his family, and figured conspicuously in the domestic history of the last administration.

His Whiskers Not White.

The oldest and richest man in Congress is also one of the five men in the United States Senate who wear whiskers, and be it recorded to his youth they are not white. They are no grayer than Senator Lodge's trim, proper, New England cut of beard, although he is twenty-one years younger; Senator O'Gorman of New York was not born until Senator Stephenson was 31 years old, and yet his beard is as iron-gray as that of the man who was 85 years old the 18th of June; both Senator Lewis of Illinois, the the youngest man in the Senate to wear a beard, and Senator Sutherland of Utah, only a few years older, are still untouched with the streaks of white.

A smooth shaven, handsome chap approached Senator Stephenson not long ago on the subject of beards.

"Why do you wear whiskers, anyway, Mr. Senator, in this hot weather?"

"Well, now, my boy," said Uncle Ike, "when I was a lumber jack up there in Wisconsin—were you ever up there in that part of the country in the winter?"

The smooth shaven, handsome young man confessed to knowing nothing about northern Wisconsin at any time of the year except as he saw it on the map.

"Well, it's cold," said the Senator with one of his kindly, whimsical smiles, "and to protect my throat, as well as for many other practical reasons, I let my beard grow. And now"—he hesitated, "well, now, I'm used to it, and I've never found any sufficient reason to take it off. So—there it is."

She Had Tried Electricity.

Mrs. Carter had suffered from rheumatism until she declared that she had "no patience with it," but she was always eager to hear of possible remedies, and when her sister wrote that she knew of a cure that had been tried with great success, and would tell her all about it on her next visit, Mrs. Carter was all excitement.

"Now, Ellen," she exclaimed, eagerly, a few minutes after her sister had reached the house, "do tell me about that cure for rheumatism! I am so anxious to hear about it that I could hardly wait for you to get here."

"Well, Caroline," began her sister, "it's electricity—"

Before she could continue, Mrs. Carter interrupted her.

"Caroline Smith! The idea of suggesting that to me! Don't you remember that only last summer I was struck by lightning and it didn't do me a mite of good?"

After a girl has smiled at every man in town and finally snared a boob into an engagement, she believes that there should be a law making flirting a felony.

"Doesn't it give you a terrible feeling when you run over a man?" they asked him. "Well, if he's a large man," replied the automobilist, "it does give one a pretty rough jolt."