

A Foolish Young Man;

Or, the Belle of the Season.

CHAPTER XXVII.

When Ida came down, he led her to a chair beside the fire which he had ordered to be lit, and laid his hand gently and tenderly on her shoulder by way of reparation and encouragement.

"Your cousin and I want to talk to you about the future, Ida," he said. "You will have to be told some time or other exactly how your father's affairs stood, and I have come to the conclusion that it is better you should know at once than that you should be permitted to remain in ignorance of the gravity of the situation. I have gone over your father's papers and looked into his affairs very carefully and closely, and I am sorry to say that they are in a very unsatisfactory condition. As I told you the other day, the estate has been encumbered and very seriously embarrassed for some time past, and the encumbrance has been increased of late, notwithstanding the admirable way in which you have managed the estate and the household affairs."

Ida raised her eyes to his and tried to regard him calmly and bravely, but her lips quivered and she checked a sigh. Mr. Wordley coughed and frowned, as a man does when he is engaged in a disagreeable and painful task.

"The principal mortgagee has given me notice of foreclosure, and the amount of the debt is so large that I am afraid it would be cruel and useless to conceal the truth from you, knowing that the property sold would not be sufficient to meet it. Of ready money there appears to be none." Mr. John Heron groaned and raised his melancholy eyes to the ceiling with an expression of reprobation. Ida appeared unconcerned by his presence and kept her sad eyes steadily fixed on the lawyer's kind and mournful face. "In a word, my dear child, your poor father appears to have left absolutely no effects behind him."

Ida drew a long breath and was silent for a moment, as she tried to realize the significance of his words.

"Do you mean that I am quite penniless?" she said, in a low voice.

Mr. Wordley blew his nose and coughed two or three times, as if he found it difficult to reply; at last he said, in a voice almost as low as hers: "Put shortly, I am afraid, my dear, that is what I must tell you. I had no idea that the estate was in so bad a way, thought that there would be something left; sufficient, at any rate, to render you independent; but, as I told you, I have been kept in ignorance of your father's affairs for some years past, and I did not know how things were going. I am surprised as well as grieved, deeply grieved; and I must confess that I can only account for the deplorable confusion and loss by the theory that I suggested to you the other day. I cannot but think that your poor father must have engaged in some disastrous speculation."

Mr. Heron groaned again, and shook his head.

"The prevailing vice of this most wicked of ages," he said. "The love of money, the gambling on the race-course and the Stock Exchange, are the root of all evil."

Ida seemed not to hear him, and Mr. Wordley ignored the comment.

"It now remains for you, my dear child, to decide what to do. I do not think you could possibly live on here, you have not the means to do so, though you should be as economical as you have been in the past; the house must pass away from you in six months' time or little more, and there would be nothing gained by your lingering hopelessly here for that period."

"I must go, then," said Ida, as if there were a stab in every word.

Mr. Wordley bent his head, and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Yes, I fear you must go," he assented. "But, thank God, you are not without friends, many friends. Lord Bannerdale charges me to tell you what his good wife has already written you—that a home awaits you at the Court, where you will be received gladly and lovingly; and I am quite sure that the door of every house in the dale is wide open for you."

Ida shrank in her chair. Clothe the offer as kindly as he might, it spelt charity—not cold charity, but charity still; and what Heron had ever tamely accepted charity from mere friends and strangers? Mr. Wordley saw the shrinking, the little shudder, and understood.

"I understand, my dear!" he said in a low voice. "But there is another offer, another home which you can accept without humiliation or compunction. Your cousin, Mr. John Heron here, will, I am sure, be only too glad, too delighted to—"

He waited and glanced at Mr. Heron impatiently, and at last that gentleman rose, but not too eagerly, to the occasion.

"I need scarcely say," he said, slowly and solemnly, "that I should not approve of my cousin accepting these offers of charity, which, though no doubt kindly meant, appear to me somewhat—obtrusive. I am not a wealthy man; my simple home cannot compare in size and grandeur with Heron Hall and the estate which my late unfortunate cousin appears to have squandered, but such as it is, Ida will be welcome in it. I am not one to turn a deaf ear to the cry of the orphan and fatherless—"

Mr. Wordley frowned and reddened, and cut in before Mr. John Heron could finish his sentence even more offensively, and so rouse Ida's spirit, and render his offer impossible of acceptance.

"Quite so, quite so, my dear sir," he said. "I am sure you will feel only too delighted and honored at the prospect of taking this dear child into your family."

"Yes," said Mr. Heron unctuously. "We will take her in as a lamb gathered into the fold, as a brand is plucked from the burning."

Ida looked at him half stupefied, and it is to be feared some doubts of his sanity arose in her mind.

"Quite so, quite so," interrupted Mr. Wordley again. "Then I think the sooner Miss Ida joins you the better; and I would suggest that she goes with you to-morrow. I will close the house and leave Jessie, the maid-servant, and Jason in charge. You and Miss Ida can depend on my guarding her interests as jealously as if they were my own. I will have a sale of the stock and other things which we are free to sell, and, meanwhile, Miss Ida must permit me to advance her some money on account of the proceeds."

He handed her an envelope in which he had already placed some bank-notes; but Ida looked at him and slowly shook her head.

"No, no, my dear!" he said. "I should not be guilty of such presumption. Though you are leaving Heron Hall, though it may be passing away from you for ever, you are still, in my eyes, Miss Heron of Heron-dale, and I should not presume to offer you—"

His voice broke, and his eyes filled with tears. "The money is yours and you can take it without any loss of the pride which is your rightful heritage. If I have not offered you a home where you would indeed be an honored guest, it is because I know that it would not be fitting for me to offer it, or you to accept it. Mr. John Heron is your natural guardian; but though that is so, I will ask you to remember that I claim the privilege of being your father's friend and yours, and that in any trouble you will be honored in any privilege when you come to me for advice and assistance."

His voice was almost inaudible before he had finished, and Ida, down whose cheeks tears were running for the first time, extended both hands in mute, but eloquent gratitude. They had both forgotten Mr. John Heron's presence, but were reminded of it by something between a cough and a sniff from him; and at a glance from Mr. Wordley, Ida turned to the gaunt figure and held out her hand.

"Thank you," she said in a low voice. "I will come with you and stay with you until—until—I can find something to do, something at which I can earn my own living. Surely there must be something I can do?" She turned to Mr. Wordley with a little anxious, eager gesture. "I am strong—very strong; I have managed Heron-dale—I can ride, and—and understand a farm. I am never tired. Surely there is something I can do!"

Her voice broke, she began to tremble, and the tears started to her eyes again. "Yes, yes; no doubt, no doubt, my child," said Mr. Wordley, whose own eyes were moist. "We will think about all that later on. You must go now and rest; you are tired."

He drew her arm within his, and patting her hand tenderly and encouragingly, led her out of the room; and stood in the hall watching her as she slowly went up the great stairs, such a girlish, mournful figure in her plain black dress.

Ida lay awake that night listening to the wind and the rain. She was familiar enough with the dale storms, but never had their wild music wailed so mournful an accompaniment to her own thoughts. Compared with her other losses, that of her home, dearly as she loved it, weighed but little; it was but an added pang to the anguish of her bereavement; and behind that, the principal cause of her grief, loomed the desertion of her lover.

She tried not to think of Stafford; for every thought bestowed on him seemed to rob her dead father's memory of its divinity to his memory; but, alas! the human heart is despotic; and as she lay awake, and listened to the wailing of the wind and the rain as it drove against the window, Stafford's voice penetrated that of the storm; and, scarcely consciously, her lips were forming some of the passionate words of endearment which he had whispered to her by the stream and on the hill-side. Though she knew every word by heart of the letter he had written her, she did not yet understand or comprehend why he had broken his solemn engagement to her. She understood that something had risen between them, something had happened which had separated them, but she could form no idea as to what it was. He had spoken of "unworthiness," of something which he had discovered that had rendered him unfit to be her husband; but she could not guess what it was; and confused and bewildered as she was, there was, at present, at any rate, no resentment in her heart.

A mist hung over the dale on this, the day of her departure from the Hall, and all the hills, which she had so loved to ride and walk were shrouded as if in tears.

She stood and looked at them from the hall window with vacant eyes, as if she did not realize that she was leaving them, perhaps for ever; but she had not long for going, for Mr. Heron and his wife were going by an early train, and the moment for farewell came swiftly upon her.

With Donald and Bess close at her heels, as if they were aware of their coming loss, she went round to say good-bye. She crossed the lawn and went to the spot under the tree where she had met Stafford that never-to-be-forgotten night, and thence walked to the corner of the terrace where they had stood and watched her father coming in his sleep, from the ruined chapel. Then she went to the stable to say good-bye to Rupert, who whinnied as he heard her approaching footsteps, and thrust his soft, velvety nose into her neck. She had to fight hard against the tears at this point, and she hid her face against that of the big horse with her arms thrown round his neck, as she murmured her last good-bye.

But the tears would not be kept back when it came to saying farewell to the two faithful souls, Jessie and Jason, with whom she had grown up from a girl all legs and wings, and whom she had learnt to regard rather as devoted friends than servants. Jason broke down completely and hurried away, his old and feeble frame shaking; and Jessie, her arms thrown round her young mistress, and with sobs and ejaculations, implored her to take her faithful Jessie with her.

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name was Joseph and the daughter's leavel; that Joseph was a clerk in the city, and that Isabel was about the same age as Ida.

"We are a very quiet family," Mr. Heron had said, "and you will no doubt miss the space and grandeur of Heron Hall; but I trust we are contented and happy; and that though our means are limited, our sphere of usefulness is wider than that of some wealthier people. My wife is, unfortunately, an invalid, and requires constant care and attention; but I have no doubt she will find strength to bear any fresh burden which Providence may see fit to put upon her. Though our circumstances are comfortable, we are not surrounded by the luxuries which so often prove a stumbling block to weaker brethren. I trust you may be happy in our humble home, and that you may find some opportunity of usefulness in this new state of life to which you are called."

Ida tried to remember all this as she stood in the centre of the drawing-room, and looked round upon the modern but heavy and ugly objects with which it was furnished.

The room was seedy and shabby, but with a different seediness and shabbiness from that of Heron Hall; for there was an attempt to conceal its loss of freshness with antimacassars, large in size and hideous of pattern. A grim and ugly portrait of Mr. John Heron occupied a great portion of one of the walls, and was confronted by a portrait, of a similar size, of his wife, a middle-class woman of faded aspect and languishing expression. The other pictures were of the type one usually sees in such houses; engravings printed from worn-out plates, and third-class lithographs. There was a large sofa covered with dirty cretonne showing that the spring had "gone;" the centre-table was adorned by several well-known religious books arranged at regular intervals. A cage containing a canary hung between the curtains in the window, and the bird, a wretched-looking animal—it was moulted—looked up at their entrance and shrilled in the hateful manner peculiar to canaries. This depressing room was lit by one gas-burner, which only permitted Ida to take in all that had been described vaguely and dimly.

She looked round aghast and with a sinking of the heart. She had never been in any room like this before, and its lack of comfort, its vulgarity, struck upon her strained nerves like a loud discordant note in music; but she owned herself the apartment complacently and turned the gas a little higher, as he said:

"I will go and fetch your cousin. Won't you sit down?"

As he spoke, the door opened and the original of the portrait on the wall entered, followed by her daughter Isabel. Ida rose from the bumpy sofa and saw a thin, harassed-looking woman, more faded even than the portrait, and a tall and rather good-looking girl, whose face and figure resembled, in a vague, indefinite way, those of both her father and mother; but though she was not bad-looking, there was a touch of vulgarity in her widely opened eyes, with a curious stare for the newcomer, and in her rather coarse mouth, which appalled and repelled poor Ida; and she stood looking from one to the other, trying to keep her surprise and wonder and disapproval from revealing themselves through her eyes. She did not know that these two ladies, being the wife and daughter of a professional man, considered themselves very much the superior of their friends and neighbors, who were mostly retired tradespeople or "something in the City;" and that Mrs. Heron was extremely proud of her husband's connection with the Herons of Heron-dale, and was firmly convinced that she and her family possessed all the taste and refinement which belong to "the aristocracy."

A simpler and homelier woman would have put her arm round the girl's neck and drawn her towards her with a few loving words of greeting and welcome; but Mrs. Heron only extended a hand, held up the latest fashionable anger, and murmured in a languid and lackadaisical voice:

"So you have come at last, my dear Miss Heron! Your train must have been very late, John; we have been expecting you for the last hour, and I am afraid the dinner is quite spoiled. But anyway, I am glad to see you."

"Thank you," said poor Ida.

It was Isabel's turn, and she now came forward with a smile that extended her mouth from ear to ear, and in a gushing manner said, in staccato sentences:

"Yes, we are so glad to see you. How tired you must be! One always feels so after a long journey. You'll be glad of a wash, Miss Heron. But, there! I mustn't call you that; it sounds so cold and formal! I must call you Ida, mustn't I? Ida! It sounds such an odd name; but I suppose I shall get used to it in time."

"I hope so," said poor Ida, trying to smile and speak cheerfully and amiably, as Miss Isabel's rather large hand closed round here; but she looked from one to the other with an appalling sensation of strangeness and aloofness, and a lump rose in her throat which rendered the smile and any further speech on her part impossible; and as she looked from the smiling, lackadaisical mother to the vulgar daughter with the meaningless smile, she asked herself whether she was really awake, whether this room was indeed to be her future home and these strange people her daily companions, or whether she was only asleep and dreaming, and would wake to find the honest face of Jessie bending over her, and to

Which Way do You Buy Sugar?



Do you say **decisively**:

- "A 5-lb. Package of REDPATH Sugar", or "A 20-lb. Bag of REDPATH", and
- get a definite quantity
- of well-known quality, "Canada's best"
- clean and uncontaminated
- in the Original Package ?

Or do you say, **thoughtlessly**:

- "A quarter's worth of Sugar", or
- "A dollar's worth of Sugar", and get
- an unknown quantity
- of unknown quality
- scooped out of an open barrel
- into a paper bag ?

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see the familiar objects of her own room at Heron Hall. (To be continued.)

BUSINESS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

It Is Standing Up Well Under the War Strain.

Among many admirable qualities that the British people are exhibiting just now, not the least admirable is the cool way in which they are adapting themselves to abnormal commercial conditions. Courage and swiftness of action on the part of those in authority, combined with common-sense and coolness on the part of the main body of the general public, are enabling them to make the best of wholly unprecedented economic conditions. And (as so often happens) they are finding the reality of every-day commercial life in war-time far less terrible than they would have expected before they tasted it. In days not long gone by, whenever the mere possibility of a vast European war, with Great Britain for a participant in it, was contemplated, there were not wanting prophets—and many of them not ill-informed people, either—who forecasted that, if Great Britain were not brought within a few weeks to the brink of starvation, her currency system would collapse, her sea-borne trade would do ditto, and her industries would stop almost of themselves.

In the result, such forebodings have been proved unjustified. The reality may turn out to be stringent and stern enough, but it is not—nor does it seem likely to be—a hundredth part as appalling as the state of terror which the imagination conjured up. The nation knows that it has to fight economic difficulties of substance. But, at least, it has shaken itself free from the fear of shadows.

First of all, Great Britain knows that she need no longer dread any grave shortage in her food supply. Secondly, she need fear no currency crisis. Thirdly, she has her trade routes open. The Atlantic and the Mediterranean alike are, for practical purposes, safe for her shipping. With the great water-ways of the world clear for their transport, she can both get her raw material from every country, save those with whom she is at war, or those so

actually affected by the war that they can provide none, and she can send her manufactures into every country save those in which the war has wiped out her market. Her European market has, of course, been seriously diminished. But even that diminution is a matter of far less concern to her to-day than it would have been a score of years ago. For to-day her markets in the United States, in the East, and in the British Dominions overseas, have attained an increased and ever-increasing importance. And in such markets she finds herself, in this time of war, practically without any European competitor at all.

At home, Great Britain's industrial position, while not free from anxiety, is not such as to cause any violent alarm. Some factories are working short time, but very few have closed down. There is a good deal of unemployment, but not a larger percentage of it than has been known, ere now, in time of peace—so far, at any rate, it is well within control, particularly in view of the very remarkable expedition with which relief arrangements have been made. Those who make and sell luxuries have, perhaps, most reason to fear a slack time. But, on the other hand, the war itself actually stimulates production in many directions. And dockyards, arsenals, and armament factories will all be responsible for a vastly increased demand for labor. Altogether, in comparison with the commercial outlook of any other belligerent nation, that of Great Britain is remarkably favorable.

His Feet Were Clean.

Billy, the grocer's boy, was lumbering up the kitchen stairs at Mrs. Clarke's, with his arms filled with parcels.

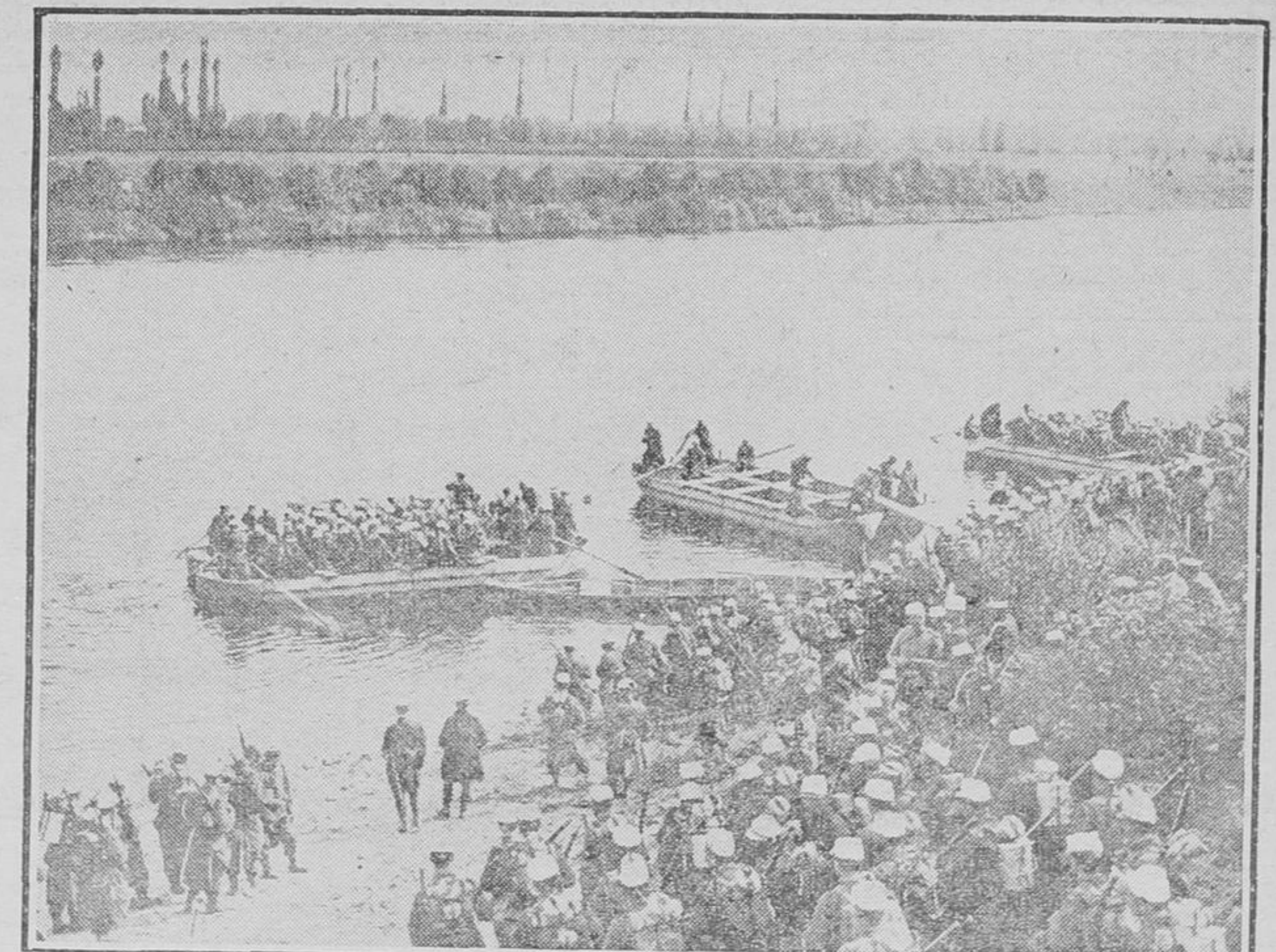
"Boy," called out Mrs. Clarke, somewhat sharply from above, "are your feet clean?"

"Yes'h," was the prompt reply, as he continued climbing the stairs, "it's only me shoes that's dirty."

Made a Capture.

"Maud Wellalong had nothing but palms at her wedding."

"Well, the palm is an emblem of victory, isn't it?"



Reinforcements Crossing a River to Join the French Army.