

# A HAPPY HOUSEHOLD.

By MARGARET LEE.

Author of "Diversions—A Brooklyn Bachelor—Lorraine and Wife—Etc."

(Continued.)  
"I should think rich men who appreciate nice things would be only too glad of the opportunity."  
"The trouble is that we and rich people don't think alike. To them wealth is genius. I once bought a picture from the artist for a man who possesses millions. The picture was on exhibition, and my friend, the millionaire, fancied it; but the price was not stated, so he asked me if I could get it for him. If he should appear in the transaction, he argued that he would be cheated. You see the latent generosity."

"Oh, yes."  
"I called on the artist, found him ill, and ill. He had just exhausted himself on an exquisite work—a landscape. It was on the easel, unframed. I could just imagine how he felt climbing to the stars for inspiration, throwing himself heart and soul into his work, and then having to come back to earth and bargain for his treasure to keep body and soul together. He looked at me when I asked him what he wanted for his picture that was in such a gallery and sold so curiously. 'Oh, he said, 'what I want is one thing! Why don't you ask me what I'll take for it? It is some time since I thought of what I wanted for it.' I said, 'That is exactly, however, what I want to know. Figure it up and double it. I'll try and get it for you.' You should have seen him come to. In ten minutes he looked ten years younger. He agreed to sell the landscape at the same price, and I went back to my art patron. The new work, the lovely landscape, never exhibited, took away his breath. He drew his check for the two pictures and considered himself lucky in their possession. So he is."

"And the artist?"  
"That was the last round, the longest. He is on top now. What is Larry signalling for? Time to leave! I'll see you at 'ner to-morrow."

## CHAPTER XII.

Rose gave Everett a bright look as they left the garden. His mother and Mrs. Minturn were slowly following. Miss Van Ness and Powers were ahead. "What do you think?"  
"It must be all coming right; I saw Mollie and Burrows leaving the garden. I suppose they've walked home. That was a brilliant idea. The whole thing looked so much like chance that I have escaped all suspicion. That will save a family explosion. Mollie can manage the matter now very easily. Father and I will sustain her. Now if you want to see the curtain go up on the first scene you'll have to hurry. I'll leave you at the hotel and you may find me waiting for you when you are ready to start. I don't stand in proper awe of my father. How do you like Powers?"

"Oh, he is charming!"  
"A human oasis, isn't he? So restful and yet invigorating. Such a man is a boon to the community. He always has time and inclination to do a nice thing for a person. You see, he has never had to think about earning money. He is too much absorbed in agreeable occupations to care to add to his income. He can tell you all about the newest thing in music, and literature, and always depend upon him for a clear, just criticism of a book. He is essentially a gentleman. If he reads a good article he'll hunt up the author and write him a little letter of thanks. He'll run in to tell an artist how much a picture has done for him. He is an ideal democrat, insisting on the equality of intellect and virtue, and the most thorough aristocrat that I know. You can't induce him to meet common people; it makes no difference who they are or what they have. He is singularly independent, consequently interesting; and has legions of friends in all grades of society. I have always known him and I wish I could see more of him. Mollie and he had cared for each other I would have been pleased; but I suppose to her he seemed rather odd."

"Old! Why, I thought he was about your age!"  
"That's a blow to his disposition. In one sense he'll never grow old, because of his kind heart. Powers is ten years my senior."

"He doesn't look it."  
"No. He was a lad when I was a little fellow, and we have always been very chummy. If you pay attention to his conversation you'll discover his age. He has read too much for twenty-five."

"I see what you mean. You are coming along famously, I think. It is a nice class."  
"Grand! Nearly two hundred will graduate. By the way, have you something nice to say to me?"  
"Rose gave him a merry glance; her dimples were bewitching."

"How do you mean? Have I ever said anything else to you?"  
"You know very well what I mean. I live on hope."  
"I wish you would not be so serious."  
"But—am. Have you thought about me?"  
"Yes—constantly. Will that do?"  
"It's better than I expected."  
"How happy you make me."  
"Mara! I suppose, that I deserve. I have so little to offer you."

Rose was leaning on his arm. She raised her eyes to meet his, which were glowing with a fire that consumed her vaguely.  
"How would it do to wait—"  
"No—I can't risk it. Here you are, carrying all before you, and I am away. Powers has lots of advantages over me."

"Oh, do you honestly think so?"  
"Don't you?"  
"I haven't thought about it at all."  
Everett gave her a lingering glance that made her cheeks vibrate with the roses at her waist. She looked very sweet in the November dusk, with the electric lights of Madison Square throwing shadows on her. Her gray hat and walking-dress had a bridal effect, and as they approached the church he said, with passionate emphasis:

"I wish we could be married now!"  
His manner silenced her yet enthralled her. She listened, spell-bound with downcast eyes.

"I'm not going back to college unless I have your promise! I tell you it is maddening to think of you among these men who can devote every moment, every thought to you! I can't stand it. I can't work—I can't do myself any justice—with this uncertainty hanging over me like lead! See, if you don't care for me, I'll make you so happy that you will have to love me if only out of pity for my great love for you! I know I am a useless fellow. I suppose you think of heroic men—of ideal fellows—capable of great actions. I'll try to be whatever you desire. You can make me what you please. We can be married as soon as I graduate, and then we can travel or stay at home, just as you will. Say 'Yes,' and I'll work like a Trojan to make you proud of me. I'll carry off prizes—I'll learn a profession. Come, do have a little feeling of the right sort for me! I don't want sympathy—nor pity! Think how father is devoted to you. All your fancies can be gratified."

"There would be no novelty in that."  
"I don't mean to wound you. You are so indifferent."  
"I want to be honest with you. What I give you should be as valuable as what I take. Can you offer me more than yourself. I think not."  
"You are very sweet to say so."  
"But I should care for you as you do for me, and I don't believe I do."

"I'm satisfied if you will only agree to try and love me."  
"That is you want me so much that you are willing to take me without this feeling that I should have for you?"  
"Yes."

"If I were a man that wouldn't astound me."  
"But you're not. You are a charming, lovely, provoking girl who doesn't know what passion means. You would treat me very differently if you did. Now, if I am willing to take the risk of making this dominant emotion which I must have, why do you hesitate to make me happy? Say 'Yes,' and the world will at once take on a different aspect. Life will be full of possible joys, of pure aspirations, of high motives. I shall leave you with my soul as well as my passions on fire."

Rose was silent. They reached the hotel, and found the little private parlor empty, bright, and warm. Rose stood before the open fire, and in the mirror above it, saw her features with a curious sensation of awe. She was white with excitement, and her eyes seemed double their natural size. Everett leaned against the mantel and watched her.

"She took off her gloves and hat, put them on a table, and sat down on the small sofa quite naturally. Presently she met his glance."

"Suppose you give me a little time."  
"I tell you, I can't endure the idea. I don't believe anybody is thinking of me."  
"That is because you are not practical."  
"You are very nice, and I like you very much. You should have more confidence in yourself."  
"I would rather trust in your promise."  
"Still, you want the feeling from God that comes next to our faith in me."  
"Is that your definition of love?"  
"Isn't it yours? I should be happy with you in a desert—willing to leave everybody for you—devoted to you if in trouble; nothing human should ever come between us."

"You believe in this wonderful passion?"  
"Yes. I read about it and I often see it. Who can describe it or explain it or limit it? It is the one thing worth having. It changes the commonplace into the ideal. I suppose, I like you so much that, for your sake, I wish I possessed this feeling for you."  
"It will come."  
"Ah, but if—"  
"There—be willing to trust yourself to me."  
"And you will trust me?"  
"Yes."

"You are very good to put such faith in me," she said with a little sigh and a glance full of calm pleasure. "I will try to be all that you wish; but you must have patience."  
"Patience. You have made me so happy that I cannot speak to you. Won't you look at me? Now you are my 'Hardy Rose.'"  
"And daddy's too. I wonder what daddy will say!"  
"You want to go and tell him how good you have been to me. May I let father know how fortunate I am? It will really make him very happy. I suppose Mollie will be radiant to-night, and altogether we'll have a very nice party in the box."  
"Quite dazzling, if she looks as you do. I don't believe there will be any necessity for you to say anything at home. You really look—like your father."

"What, handsome?"  
"It is quite an indescribable change." She put her hands in his, speaking impulsively. "It is lovely to have it in my power to make you feel like this; but at the same time, it awes me! What if I fall short of your expectations? I may cause you intense misery!"  
"Now, don't think in that direction. I am going to enjoy my new hopes. I don't want to go away."  
"Why not dine with us?"  
"And will you wait for me? I can get home and back in half an hour."  
"And I'll dress for the theatre."  
"That's as it should be."

Everett was apparently supplied with wings. On his return he found Rose awaiting him. He gazed at her with rapture, including her dress.  
"You look like a great bluish rose!"  
"What is it?"  
"China crape, the man called it. Do you think your father will approve of me?"  
"Approve! You put your hair high for me. What, the anchor, too?"  
"Isn't this a festival? It is so novel to be engaged."  
"I ran into Thorley's for these white violets."

"My pets! How did you know it?"  
"Why are you so interested in my father?"  
"You seemed so indifferent to him."  
"But I have been trying to stomp for that."  
"I know you have, and I like you for it."  
"What did the daddy say?"  
"He hasn't heard. He sent me a little note; he satisfactory to some club with an old friend, and will join us at the theatre. Grandma guessed it. She hugged and kissed me. She is delighted."

"You should see Mollie! She ran in to kiss me while I was dressing. Mother has accepted the inevitable quite gracefully. Father is satisfied. Burrows was to dine with them and come to the theatre. I wonder how much of the play we four will see or hear! I have hugged my secret to my heart. It is too lovely to part with."  
"But you—father?"  
"He'll enjoy discovering it when he comes in. By the way, did he send you flowers?"  
"Yes, roses that will match my dress. I can wear yours and carry his. Yours are so sweet and shy they will hardly be noticed. See how they harmonize with the pearls and lace. There is something very satisfactory that being so much to one individual. Now that your heart is at rest, will you carry off prizes? I want you to excel your father's record."

"You ambitious girl!"  
"Certainly."  
"What profession am I to adopt?"  
"The one that most attracts you."  
"I'm beginning to feel that I ought to help father in his business affairs."  
"I don't trust me implicitly, and I could take some of the weight on my shoulders."  
"They are so nice and broad. How could you do any better with your time and talents?"

## CHAPTER XIII.

On the next morning Mr. Minturn had a little talk with Everett. The young man's happiness was so complete and unaffected that the elder one, while sensible, was wholly sympathetic.

"Of course, I realize that Rose does not love me in the ordinary sense of the word. How could she? I am not gifted with the attractive qualities that excite passion. Besides, a cold woman gives a man something to attain that is worth having."

"There is some truth in your theory; but I am inclined to believe that Rose carried more for you than she is aware of. My experience has taught me that healthy young women, with sound, cultivated minds, are not thinking of passion; they might be unconsciously swayed by it and attribute the influence to some other power. But I must warn you to respect the passion of what you call 'a cold woman.' She reserves it for the adoration of one man. Instead of letting it dribble away upon half a dozen. As a counter-quest, if she finds that she has given her all, and that the treasure is slightly regarded, she becomes extremely wretched. With her marriage is joy or misery. Love is inordinately selfish and cruel. It is a single-handed quest. She reserves it for the adoration of one man. Instead of letting it dribble away upon half a dozen. As a counter-quest, if she finds that she has given her all, and that the treasure is slightly regarded, she becomes extremely wretched. 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