

Literature.

All's Well That Ends Well.

(Continued from last Issue.)

Hardly less agitated, Sir Frederic tries to disengage himself; and having succeeded, rushes off after the intruder, while Lady Haworth sinks down upon the grass covering her face with her hands, only conscious that something terrible—she hardly knows what—is going to happen.

How long she remains there she has no idea, but many minutes cannot have elapsed when her husband comes back to her side, lifts her—not ungently, but without a touch of his usual and until now unflinching tenderness—from the ground, and half leads, half carries her back to the drawing room; with such a strange, stern, terrible look upon his face, that May can only sink helplessly back upon the cushions of the sofa on which he has placed her and cover her face with both little shaking hands, too much terrified even to weep.

For a few moments the silence in the room is unbroken save by Sir Frederic's hurried steps as he moves up and down the room, not able to trust himself to speak yet; but at last he stops beside the couch and addresses his wife.

"May," he says, in a quiet, stern voice, which falls upon Lady Haworth's heart like a blow, "I am waiting."

May lifts her head and tries to speak, but the words die away upon her lips as she meets the accusing, reproachful glance of her husband's eyes, and the pretty head droops once more.

"Have you nothing to say to me?" he goes on, after a short pause. "Have you any explanation to give me of the scene of which I was an unwilling spectator to-night?"

Once more Lady Haworth tries to speak; once more she fails.

"I am sorry to distress you so terribly," he continues, coldly, "but it is unavoidable. The person who was with you," he speaks with a great effort, "and he is deathly pale, managed to get away before I could detain him, so that I am forced—"

"Ah!"

The exclamation breaks from her like a little cry of relief, and Sir Frederic's eyes flash fire as he thinks that all her agitation and anxiety are for the man who has escaped his just anger, and not for the pain which she is giving him—her husband.

"So that I am forced to come to you for the explanation which is mine by every right," he goes on, mastering his emotion by an effort which drained every shade of color from his cheeks and lips.

"What is the meaning of the touching rendezvous which I surprised so inconsiderately?"

"Fred," she begins, faintly, lifting her head and turning towards him without raising her eyes to his face, "be patient with me; do not be angry; I have done nothing so very wrong; I have—"

"Done nothing wrong," he repeats, with passionate disdain. "What is your standard of right and wrong? It must differ strangely from mine. Good Heavens! Is it possible? Am I mad or dreaming? I return home unexpectedly and find my wife—the woman I loved and trusted, the mother of my child—with a strange man, who flies at my appearance; and when I ask her for the explanation she says she has done nothing wrong! Who is that man?" he continues, going over to the sofa, and taking the two slender wrists in his, forces her to face him. "I must be answered—I will have no prevarication—no falsehood!"

She throws back her head, and her eyes meet his with a passionate, indignant glance.

"Falsehood! Have you ever found me untruthful that you insult me so?"

"Insult you?" he repeats, disdainfully, "I could hardly insult you after what I witnessed tonight. Who is that man? What brought him here tonight?"

There is a short breathless silence; then very slowly, very regretfully, May answers:

"I cannot tell you," she says, faintly.

"You cannot tell me!" he repeats, with a strange menace in his voice. "You cannot! but I must know!"

"And I cannot tell you," she answers, unsteadily. "Oh! Fred, do not press me! Dearest, I am grieved, grieved beyond measure, to hurt you even a little; but try to believe me, my darling; it is not what you think. I shall never see him again—there is no need."

She has risen in her earnestness and has drawn near him, putting one little hand on his arm; but he shakes it off with contemptuous swiftness.

"Believe you!" he repeats, passionately. "How can I ever believe you? I trusted you as I loved you, with my whole heart, and you have betrayed me treacherously and basely. You feigned love—"

She interrupts him quickly.

"I feign! I love you—you know that I love you with my whole heart!" she cries, passionately. "Fred, do you forget that I have been your wife, your true and loving wife, for nearly three years, and that I have never—"

She pauses abruptly, the slow hot color rises in her face and her eyes droop. "Ah! you cannot finish that sentence," he says, bitterly; "you have never deceived me! Never but once, and that has been continuously from the time I saw

you first. I thought you true, and steadfast, and—"

His voice fails him. Angry as he is with her, his pain and anguish are greater than his anger. He has loved her so deeply, so passionately, so entirely, and she is so false—so false! His very heart seems breaking with the weight of sorrow which has been so suddenly laid upon him. The sternness dies out of his face, and the firm lips quiver a little with the misery he strives so vainly to struggle against.

At the first signs of softening on the face that has never until now looked with anger upon her, May springs to her husband's side and clasps her hand upon his arm in earnest, passionate entreaty.

"Fred, dearest, listen to me. I have done wrong truly; but I have not deceived you as you think. Husband, listen to me. Try to trust me, dear, and to believe that I have never wronged you in thought, or word, or deed. Darling, don't turn from me! You know I love you—you know that all my heart is yours now, as it has ever been and ever will be. Oh, forgive me if I have pained you; forgive—forgive!"

Tears have come now and great choking sobs are shaking the slender frame with terrible violence, as May bows her head upon her husband's arm in uncontrollable emotion; but Sir Frederic is not inclined to yield to prayers, or entreaties until the mystery has been cleared up. His voice is, however, gentler now, and his touch less cold, as he gently places her upon a chair, and stands beside her until the nervous paroxysm has partly subsided; then, when she holds out a timid, unsteady hand, he takes it into his strong grasp.

"You are better?" he said, gently. "You can listen to me? Forgive me if I was harsh; but I have suffered a lifetime of misery during the last half hour! May, what is this secret you are keeping from me so cruelly? Who is the man you met to-night, and with whom I saw you standing in familiar converse? I have often told you that I could pardon anything but a long deception. And you would not deceive me with a wife? What is that man? What is his name?"

"I do—I do—not know," she says, faintly, letting her head droop against her husband's arm as he stands beside her.

"You do not know?" he says, slowly, the tenderness dying out of his face.

"No," she repeats, wearily.

"And yet you meet him at—to say the least of it, a very unusual hour—and he flies at my approach?"

There is a moment's silence.

"Won't you trust me, Fred?" she says, tremulously. "Oh, darling, believe me, when I tell you there is no sin—only—oh, if I could tell you—if I could tell you!"

"May, listen to me. Nothing you can have done can hurt me so cruelly as this suspense—nothing could equal this torture! Think what you are letting me suspect—think to what degrading suspicions you are exposing yourself—May, be frank with me!" he entreats, passionately—"think how I have loved you—think of what I must suffer in the thought—the awful thought that you are false—you, my wife!"

"False!" she repeats, piteously, "Ah! no, I never loved you more dearly than now! Fred, try and trust me. I am not false; and yet—and yet—ah, if I could but tell you!"

"This is childish!" he says, angrily, disengaging his hand from her clasp. "You expect me to believe—ah—"

He broke off with a little cry of exaltation, and anger, and pain, which makes May lift her head in surprise, and follow the direction of his.

At the window she can see the outline of a tall, dark form, enveloped in a cloak; but before the cry of alarm and surprise which rises to her lips can find vent her husband has thrown open the window, and the stranger has advanced into the room.

He is a tall, slim, graceful man, of one or two-and-twenty, and eminently handsome in a dark, foreign style of beauty, which could not fail to be attractive.

White to his lips, Sir Frederic stands facing him, while May rises, leaning on a table near her for support.

"You must pardon such an intrusion," the stranger said, bowing with grave deference first to Sir Frederic and then to Lady Haworth, "but after my flight I thought it wiser to return and corroborate the explanation which Lady Haworth has probably given you, Sir Frederic."

He speaks easily and pleasantly, and with the least foreign accent giving piquancy to his speech.

"Lady Haworth refuses me any explanation!" Sir Frederic answers, haughtily.

"That is because she fears your indignation for an act of disobedience which is trifling in itself, but which—Have I your permission to speak, Lady Haworth?"

May inclines her head slightly, but she says nothing; her lips are too dry and parched for speech.

"I first had the pleasure of seeing Lady Haworth at Homburg, two months ago," the stranger continues in the same easy manner. "You will remember your shot stay there, and your careful avoidance of the gaming-tables at the Kursaal. I think you never entered them, Sir Frederic? No doubt, no doubt; but Lady Haworth had the natural curiosity of her sex, and one day when you were absent for an hour or two, she—"

"But I had so earnestly entreated you

—begins Sir Frederic, turning to his wife, and May springs forward.

"I know you had forbidden it," she says, pitifully; but I was so curious. I was so curious. I was wrong I know; but once there—oh! my husband, forgive me!—I did not try to resist the temptation! I played and lost, and played and lost, until I lost more than I could pay; and but for this gentleman's kindness I should have—"

"It was but for a moment," the stranger continues, seeing that May's emotion chokes her. "Lady Haworth was agitated and distressed, but she allowed me to lead her out of the gambling rooms, and it was arranged that I should meet her the following day to receive the money she had allowed me to advance. But that night I was called away from Homburg, and I left without having communication with her ladyship. Three days ago chance brought me to this neighborhood, and with a romantic desire for an adventure—for which I cannot forgive myself now—I begged Lady Haworth to meet me to-night in the grounds. If I had known the pain it would have caused her, I would have cut off my right hand first!"

There is no mistaking the sincerity and earnestness of the lad's explanation, and Sir Frederic is so overjoyed and relieved that he can only hold out his hand and mutter some incoherent thanks for the kindness shown to his wife, while he offers Monsieur de la Frenaye hospitality for the night—an offer which the latter declines, as he is expected at the friend's with whom he is staying; but he accepts an invitation to dinner on the following day, kisses Lady Haworth's hand with a low, earnestly-spoken "Forgive me!" and Sir Frederic walks down the avenue with him, leaving May to recover the agitation she had borne.

Lady Haworth's thoughts are very mixed as she awaits her husband's return. He has such a horror of gambling, born not merely from his strict sense of honor and rectitude, but from the fact that a brother to whom he was much attached had committed suicide at a gaming table, maddened by his losses, that he will find it difficult to forgive her, although her penitence is so earnest and so sincere; and she stands trembling and pale, waited for her husband as a culprit might wait for his judge. But Sir Frederic is too overjoyed at the falseness of his suspicions, and too full of regret at the anger he has shown, to reproach his wife for her deception; and he is hardly less moved than herself when he takes her into his strong arms, and at the very same moment they utter an earnest "Forgive me!" and there is a confused sound of kisses and tender words and a sob or two in the pretty drawing-room.

"I will never, never deceive you again!" May whispers, presently. "I have been very wretched, Fred!"

"My poor darling, how could I be such a brute! If you get into a scrape again, love, you must come to your husband, and not accept assistance from good-looking foreigners. You must trust me all in all or not at all, May!"

"Forgive me, Fred, I was very wrong!"

"And forgive me, darling; I was unpardonably cross; but if we were all punished as we deserved, sweet, few of us would escape a flogging."

"And I should have a severe flogging," said May, half smiling, half tremulous; but her Frederic silenced the sweet lips in a very effectual manner by the application of his own.

The lesson is a salutary one. Lady Haworth never dreams of deceiving her husband, and Sir Frederic has learned that it is not always prudent to judge by appearances.

(The End.)

Slaves of Circumstances.

All of us at certain periods of our existence are obliged to readjust our lives to altered conditions, which are sometimes of our own choosing, but oftener are forced upon us by circumstances. It requires a good deal of philosophy to accept the inevitable with good grace and to make the best of the situation, especially if, as is so often the case, a great wave of adversity engulfs us and our ships go down freighted with all that we consider necessary to our happiness.

In such a case nothing remains but to see what is possible to save from the wreck, and to reconstruct our lives on the new lines which fate has left possible for us. Often this patient readjustment is pathetically heroic.

An accident happens, for instance, whereby a man or woman full of life and happiness is stricken down and condemned to lead the life of an invalid. After the first great shock and impotent despair he or she begins slowly and painfully to enter the new existence with brave endurance. It is not uncommon to see a woman who, bereaved of husband and children, becomes a ministering angel, full of pity and sympathy for others; or to know people suddenly deprived of life long luxury show, in facing disaster, a heroism worthy of all admiration.

The world is full of these reconstructed lives, and it is to the credit of our human nature that we seldom succumb to misfortune.

Little May was showing the pictures in the album to the visitor, and on coming to the picture of her father's first wife she said:

"That's my eldest mother."

COOK'S ANODYNE LINIMENT.

Came Too Late.

Traveller from frontier district, striking hotel where advanced fashions have obtained, observes with an expression of pleased surprise the finger bowl set before him at the close of the meal.

"What's that for, waiter?"

"To wash your hands, sir."

"I wish I'd 'a' know'd it 'fore I began my dinner."

Teacher—Who was the man who never told a lie?

Scholar—My dad.

Thecher—No, no; George Washington.

Scholar—Oh, all right, den. I'm going home to tell my dad you said he was a liar.

McGorry—O'll buy yez no new hat, d'yez mind that? Ye are vain enough ah-riddy.

Mrs. McGorry—Me vain? O'im not! Shure, O! don't t'ink meself half as good lookin' as O! am.

Fate.

"Oh, George!" wailed the maiden as she met him in the darkened hallway, "we can't be married to-morrow! It will have to be postponed!"

"What is the matter, darling?" said George his knees trembling under him.

"Is any relative dead? Has your Uncle Hiram failed in business?"

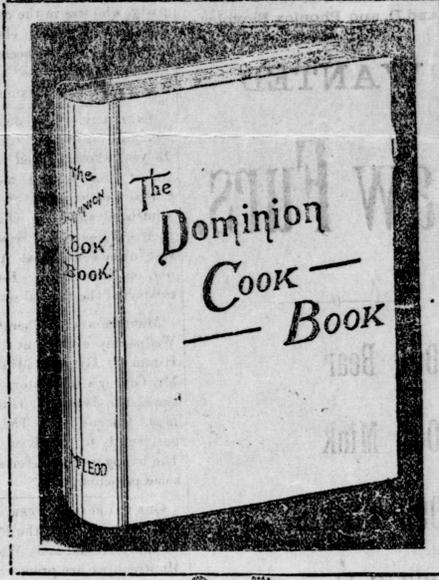
"Worse than that!" she sobbed. "There's a b-b-boil coming on the end of my nose!"

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