



## CHAPTER VIII.

Sighing, dying, languishing toward one man, as flowers at daybreak lean toward the sun, an audience, composed mainly of women, sat in one of the big drawing rooms of a house in Lancaster Gate and drank in the notes of his voice as he sang one of his own songs, which was of love, as indeed most of his songs were.

The man really was a thoroughly good fellow, a splendid son, a staunch friend and a born musician, but the crowd of women, not of the first order, who prostrated themselves before him had begot in him a profound contempt for the whole sex, that showed in every line of his face as his arrogant eyes, with that knock of rolling upward which made most men long to kick him, wandered over the silly, fluttering, adoring crowd spread out before him.

"It makes one's blood boil! Look at that girl. Her very hairpins are falling out!" said Lesley in a fierce aside to Roger Yelverton, whose black coat was the only one in the row of chairs where they sat. "Such a man could not be if woman had not made him what he is! Yet there's something warm, human, magnetic about him."

She spoke slowly, studying the singer very intently.

"And if he got his hair cut and didn't roll up his eyes?" She paused, then said, looking really tragic, "After all, I do believe there is a class of women who like being—kicked!"

"My dear!" said Lady Appuldurcombe, who, on her other side, had caught the words and looked alarmed, for Lesley had been so good the last few days that a burst out in the wrong direction seemed to be inevitable.

"They're very rummy," said Yelverton, shaking his smooth, fair head. "Something in a man catches their vanity, or their fancy, or taste, and off they go—you can't stop 'em! But a man must give out somehow that he doesn't mind being adored, like this fellow, just as another man, without saying a word, refuses, like Ronny, now, for example. Where would he be, if with all his fame, he—er—er?"

"Encouraged us?" said Lesley dryly. "But Ronny is not a lovable person. He has not large"—she extended her hands in a sweep—"all entrancing, grand ways. He does not roll his eyes or make a point of saying, 'I love you,' instead of 'How do you do?'" She stopped to laugh. "He is one of your concentrated, deadly reticent, Brand's essence sort of person, is Ronny?"

"All the better for the woman he marries," said Roger manfully, for he carried a very sore heart about with him in those days, only occasionally healed over by such a happy position as he found himself in just now. "When a man like that does fall in love—"

"Ah, when?" said Lesley gayly. "That will be when cap and pigskin have vanished off the face of the earth—not before! A little less than his horse and dearer than his dog, you know!"

She spoke discreetly low, for Lady Appuldurcombe was on her other side, though just then in deep conversation with a distant relative, Mrs. Fane.

Roger Yelverton stole a glance at the girl's unconscious face as she sat beside him. He never could quite make up his mind whether he liked her best in her fresh morning gown of cambric, or her foamy ball gown, or riding Coquette—his two darlings, as in his heart he called them—or as she looked here, all in white, with broad sleeves of exactly the same color as her wonderful eyes and "finished" with all those little minauderies of a young girl's dress that are so grotesque on older women.

Her mouth had fallen into those curves that would have been petulant with a weaker character, and her round, firm chin came boldly out a little in advance of the tip of her small, straight nose, that had the proudly cut nostrils peculiar to brave, sensitive temperaments.

"Did you ever see such a room?" she said, glancing round at the pink satin panels, heavily incised in gilding, that decorated the walls, and the massive silver gilt coffer and tables in the window; the mantel board, also gilt, supporting ornate candelabra, and more gift monstrosities. "How thankful we ought to be that the hostess has not gilded the cut-glass chandeliers!"

"I'm afraid of you," said Roger, laughing. "Do I not see Cynthia de Salis afar off?"

"Yes; isn't it horrid? We quite expected to sit together."

"You are great friends, you two," said Roger, with a certain wonder that he felt unable to hide.

"Yes; I—I'm educating her," said Lesley, turning a saucy young face round on him.

And so she was, though the name of Ronny Kilmurray, save casually, was never even mentioned between them.

"She's years older than you are!" blurted out Roger, who often found it difficult to reconcile Lesley's distracting youth with the extreme agedness of her conversation.

"She is 25, and she has wasted four whole years of her life and shan't waste any more," said Lesley enigmatically, though she often said to Yelverton things she never dreamed of saying to any one else. He was so safe,

dependent, something like Bob, as men often are like one another, much oftener than women are like women.

"Did you see her snub Ronny yesterday?" said Lesley in great delight. "I never saw a man look so astonished in all my life. If only he had been taken in hand earlier!" And Lesley sighed as if she had been bringing up men in the way they should go ever since she was born.

"You're fearfully down on us poor devils," said Roger, with the air of having discovered something quite original and greatly calculated to astonish her.

"When I have been married 50 years to one man, and he loves me as much as on the day he married me, in spite of tempers and fat or lean, the loss of any charm I ever possessed, and all the other ills that flesh is heir to, I'll believe in a man's love, and not before," said Lesley decidedly.

"There are plenty of men who would do that," said Roger eagerly. "Nothing will ever rid you of your 'ways,' Miss Malincourt, or— But in his excitement he had raised his voice, and a soft 'S-sh' here cut him short.

The conversation had by no means proceeded uninterruptedly, but in tags and scraps between the coming and going of those artists who divided with the composer the honors of the afternoon.

He was now on the platform, and all the women's heads and bodies were slanting one way toward him, as you will see a row of trees on the seacoast much exposed to the fury of the gales permanently forced out of the perpendicular for all time by the wind.

"There is immense vitality in that man," said Lesley when he had thrown a last look of pity around, and the bent backs and vaporing faces were straightening themselves with a long drawn sigh. "Do you see how crisply his hair curls? Hair is an infallible guide to temperament."

"Then I've got none at all," said Roger, smoothing the top of his head, "for mine is as straight as—as tallow candles and much the same color," he added ruefully.

"Is it nearly over?" said Lesley, looking round. "And don't you think that concerts and—and loads of silver gilt are conducive to an extremely elevated style of conversation?"

On her other side Lady Appuldurcombe was saying in ruffled but extremely low accents, close to Mrs. Fane's ear:

"You got an entirely wrong account, my dear; it was not nearly so bad as her boxing the duke's ears, after all. Lesley was being literally stalked down by the man, who, for all his position, has no business at all in society, though it does consist of the best and the worst in the world, you know. He has the reputation of forcing himself on any woman he admires, the more especially if she does not admire him. Well, he came up to Lesley the other night and held out his hand, when she had already passed him without recognition. Everybody was looking and scented mischief because, as Ronny says, in the shocking

slang of the day, 'She makes me all pull our socks up,' and when Lesley looked Dashwood straight in the eyes and turned on her heel people smiled, but he simply walked round, so as to intercept her, and said, 'Miss Malincourt, you have forgotten me; we met at the opera last night.'"

"She drew herself up, and said, 'I decline the honor of your acquaintance!' looking so tall she seemed to tower above him, though he is 6 feet 3, and, though I saw she was trembling in every limb, she looked like Ronny does when he is roused, and nothing will move him. She was just turning to me, when the great bully came back, bringing his hostess, who said, with perfect unconsciousness of the situation, 'Miss Malincourt, permit me to introduce to you Sir Graham Dashwood.'"

"Lesley had a big fan of crimson roses in her hand, and for a moment I thought she would have struck him across the face with it, she was so transported with anger; then, 'I have twice tonight refused the honor of this man's acquaintance,' she said, and all the women who had been run down and insulted by the brute (excuse me, my dear) looked as if they could have clapped their hands and kissed her!"

"And what did he do then?"

"Slunk away, and he will never be admitted to that house, and a good many others, again. But you will admit that it is rather—rather—for a chaperon, you know."

"Oh, very. But it's extraordinary how women like her, considering how wild the men are about her. I see she and Cynthia are great friends. I hear some news about the latter. Is it true?"

"Is what true?"

"That she is going to take Onslow at last, and she couldn't do better. He has been very patient."

"I only hope it may be true," said Lady Appuldurcombe slowly, but with a vague feeling of slight to Ronny, as if some one had filched from him a jewel he did not value, but yet was his.

"And I suppose that is a match, too?" said Mrs. Fane, looking at Lesley and Yelverton, who had the air of thoroughly good comrades as they talked together.

"Oh, dear, no! There is a young man

in the country," said Lady Appuldurcombe in an absentminded way, for she was asking herself, "Was this another of Miss Lesley's tricks?" And, if so, was she getting Cynthia out of the way because she wanted Ronny for herself? And Ronny? She knew that he had very decided views of what a young English maiden, strictly brought up, should be, and into the face of every one of his prejudices, great and small, deliberately flew.

## CHAPTER IX.

Two young people, both victims to primitive habits of early rising (now discontinued), quite independently discovered that four walls were intolerable when a glorious summer morning beckoned them abroad to rejoice in its crystal freshness; but, a woman being always quicker at following out her ideas than a man, it happened that Lesley got to Lady Appuldurcombe's front door first and unbarred it and stepped forth about 20 seconds before Ronny appeared on the scene.

He blamed Charville, or Charville's young gentleman, for the unfastened door until, to his surprise, he saw Lesley's tall figure marching ahead of him and at that moment turning, with a businesslike air, in at Stanhope Gate.

He hesitated and almost turned back. Where was she going? What had she now in her mind? A tryst to keep, a prank to play! But, no—he remembered the quivering scorn in her face when she had repeated that accusation of his of "slipping off" with Yelverton.

If he had thought so, he would have gone the other way, for he was not Lesley's keeper, and, if she did not look back and see him, was not the park free to all?

She was more plainly dressed than usual, he thought, and certainly her brown holland gown had all the merit (and costliness) of extreme simplicity; so had her coarse straw hat, with its white ribbon bow. It was the way that hat and holland gown were carried that satisfied Ronny's fastidious taste as he walked at ease behind them.

It was one of his standing quarrels with the human race that it did not know how to walk and would never learn, while there is scarcely an animal that does not know how to use its limbs gracefully and well.

Lesley threw up her head, now and then, to sniff the air, her elastic step indicating boundless content within, and the few poor people they met looked at her with envy, as at some young goddess of youth and health, and to one she gave a bright morning greeting, to another money. Presently she turned out of the but lately opened gates and stood, hesitating, in Piccadilly.

"Covent Garden, miss?" said the burly policeman she addressed. "Straight down through Piccadilly and Leicester square, turn to your right, then to your left, and there you are." When she had smiled and thanked him, Bobby stood looking after her, and he, too, smiled. Even his hideous dress and office could not quite cut him off from manly emotions, and he was aware that, quite early in the day, he had got a most especial treat and intelligently enjoyed it.

He touched his hat when Ronny passed him, for Ronny was extremely well known, but the look of pleasure diminished on his face, and as a man he felt resentful, for he did not consider Ronny good enough for the young lady.

"They're run uns, these aristocrats," he soliloquized as he watched what he supposed to be the sweethearts' disappearance in the distance. "Covent Garden, and single file, at this time of the morning, when they might lie snug in their beds! And I will say that blue eyes and black hair, with a color like a rose, is my fancy, and a walk so as she'd go over cobblestones as if they was satin!" he added, thinking that if that were his sweetheart he would not tail behind, but step out brisk beside her.

And then he thought of his fat, sandy haired old woman at home and sighed.

Half way down Piccadilly, Lesley's shoestrings came untied, and as she stooped to tie it, resting her foot on a doorstep, Ronny stepped forward and performed the task for her.

She started very slightly, and, looking down on him as he knelt with a face full of delicious mirth and mischief, said:

"Don't be alarmed! Naught is here in danger."

"May I come with you?" said Ronny, when he had rubbed the dust from his knees and straightened himself. "I heard you tell the policeman where you were going."

"You know," said Lesley, keeping swift step with him, as a man likes a woman to do, but only a tall woman can, "dad said to me: 'There's only one thing worth seeing in London, and that's Covent Garden market before people are awake. You get a real smell of the country there, and breath of the earth.' But what will auntie say?"

And she turned a look of mischief on Ronny, at which he laughed and shook his head. "But with the good, the filial, the respectable Ronny beside me, who could possibly say anything?"

"That's all right, then," said Ronny cheerily, "in case we meet any one we know."

"As if any of them would be up," said Lesley, looking disdainfully up at the Army and Navy club, which they were then passing. "Doesn't it smell of sleep? And, after all, I don't see why the poor—who get little else—shouldn't have the delicious early morning hours to themselves. It must soothe their starved hearts and do them good, even if they don't know it. Don't you think so, Ronny?"

"It strikes me the poor get a lot of pity they don't deserve," said Ronny, who was a Conservative to the backbone, and who did not, like some Conservatives, talk like a halfpenny Radical paper. "The worst of these poor is that they won't work; they'll knock up

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SUN

IRA CORNWALL

OVER TASKS THAT YOU OR I WOULD DO WITH

out flinching, if we had got to do them.

"That is where our training comes in," cried Lesley. "The head helps the hands, but those poor wretches, who sink painfully along from birth to burial, they can be taught by our trying to make their lives happier. Oh, Ronny, at the Savoy the other night, after dinner, I stood on the balcony, and saw the dark figures far below on the embankment, and the black river beyond, and I thought of what might be, if only the people who have too much money would help those who have too little!"

"And what would you do?" said Ronny as they crossed the deserted circus, that looked strangely unfamiliar under the clear, pure morning sky.

"I would light up the embankment brilliantly from end to end. Think of that beautiful background of trees and picturesque houses, the most beautiful site in Europe for a people's playground! I would have a café chantant at intervals under those trees, with seats where people could rest and listen, and there should be stalls and books, and every woman her lemonade or coffee, and the poorest of all should be there, and the children who were big enough should come too!"

"The weather?" said Ronny concisely. "But it does not rain right through the summer. I would draw the men out of the public houses, the poor, tired women out of their stifling dens, and they should all have a few hours of peace in the open air, with such music as pleased them, and they would go home refreshed to sleep, not to wrangle and fight, as they do now. I would do the same with Hyde park, and any other green space that was meant just as much for the enjoyment of the poor as the rich!"

Ronny shook his head. "It would never answer," he said. "Oh, why not?" cried Lesley passionately. "Were all the pleasures in the world, even pure air, made solely for the rich? I think it is immoral—it is horrible!—that one man may own 20,-



They had both stopped in the middle of Leicester square.

000,000 of money and another has to commit a crime to keep the life in his miserable body! And if I were wealthy," cried the girl indignantly, "I'd be a spendthrift! It's the spendthrifts who are the real friends of the poor. Some of their money filters through to the very lowest classes, and, even if he does ruin himself, he has done more good than the man who never touches the bulk of his money, but hands it on to his son, and generation after generation that money is simply accumulating and does not help to save one soul alive!"

"Lesley!" said Ronny, stopping short to look at her. "And you call yourself a Conservative?"

"I call myself a woman," said Lesley. "Oh! how could one be happy to have millions that one never touched

aches, sore throat, tonsillitis and deafness. 60 cents.

How to Make a Squeak. "I have heard," said Mr. Goslington, "that years ago some people used to like squeaky shoes; that the squeak was considered an indication of newness; and that manufacturers sometimes put in squeak leather, a piece of thin leather placed between the inner sole of the shoe. Then again I have heard that people who didn't like the squeak, when they did get a pair of squeaky shoes, drove tacks through the soles to stop the squeak, or wet them. In these days people don't like squeaky shoes; but if any body should want his shoes to squeak, I think I can tell him how to make them do so."

"I took my slippers off the other day and placed them on the steam radiator; when I put them on again they squeaked beautifully."

He saw that she was trembling, and in the strenuous young face turned up on him was something spiritual that fairly startled him. Lesley with a soul! Lesley, the elusive, who had barely seemed to possess a heart!

"What makes you think of all these things, Lesley?" he said, with an effort. "Do I drive all over London with auntie, keeping my eyes shut? Dad is right, and this splendid city of yours is a cruel place!"

"It is," said Ronny. "The nearer you get to civilization the more corrupt human nature becomes, the farther from God. It is only among savages that the primitive virtues exist, and there you will find the humble flower of modesty in woman, of clean living in man, and many nobler qualities unknown here in the spirit, though observed in the letter to save appearances."

They had both stopped in the middle of Leicester square, looking earnestly at each other, and neither saw a man in a state evening dress, with crumpled tie, who leaned far out of his hansom as he passed, as if to make quite sure of their identity.

"So you box my ears, madam, do you, and walk in Leicester square at half past 6 in the morning?" Graham Dashwood muttered furiously, "and there is no need to say you were with your cousin, Kilmurray; some other name will go better with the story!"

Smiling, he lifted his evil, sodden face—one ugly, long misrecord of his life—to the fair morning sky, and the horrible contrast that the debased human makes to nature struck even upon the comprehension of a workingman who was passing by and made him thank God he was not a "bloomin' aristocrat."

"I can smell Covent Garden!" cried Lesley joyously, five minutes later.

"So can I," said Ronny ruefully, who knew some of Covent Garden's little ways, and was wondering which of its smells, various as those of Cologne, they could most successfully avoid.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

An Art Connoisseur.

Madame goes with her maid to purchase a still-life picture for her dining-room. She selects at the pictures-dealer's a painting representing a bouquet of flowers, with a pie cut into, and a half-penny roll. She paid 500 francs for the lot.

"Ah, me," whispered the bonne, "you have made a bad bargain; let me tell you; I saw a picture like that sold for 400 francs."

"And was it as good as this one?"

"Of course it was; there was a lot more pie!"—Paris Moniteur Oriental.

Vigoro

Dusty Rhodes—How's your appetite these days?

Fitz William—I've got to a point where it makes me hungry to eat.

aches, sore throat, tonsillitis and deafness. 60 cents.

How to Make a Squeak.

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