



CHAPTER III.
The awful moment had arrived. Face to face with her inquisitor sat Lesley, the scapegrace, and the fact that the boudoir was delicious in its blue and white walls and Nankin china, that the evening before had been delightful, and that the afternoon's programme promised equally well, did not make this mauvais quart d'heure a scrap the more bearable—rather the reverse, in fact, to the sinner.

"But, my dear, what have you done to be sent away in disgrace like this?" Lady Appuldurcombe was saying in very kind tones.

"Nothing. I didn't do anything. It was—was the other people who did it all."

"Did what?"

"Bothered me to marry them, you know, and all that," said Lesley, adding rather defiantly, "just as if I could marry them all!"

"But your father didn't complain of their falling in love with you," said her aunt. "Jilted was the word he used—that you had jilted half the county."

"Dad's weak point is his arithmetic. He never could add up anything properly," said Lesley, with a fine air of outrage, "and he doesn't know anything like half the county. It's too big!"

"But, my dear, to jilt a man you must first be engaged to him."

"Yes," said Lesley very slowly, "but you don't call it being engaged to a man when you promise to marry him just to keep him from worrying you morning, noon and night?"

"He would worry you much more if you were engaged to him!"

"Oh, no! I used to make it a point of honor with them that if I promised them to be kept their distance till I—told them to come nearer. And I never did."

Lady Appuldurcombe smiled irrepressibly, but shook her head.

"You mean to say they never tried to kiss you?"

"Sometimes, but they couldn't, you know," nodding triumphantly. "I'm too tall and too strong," she added, drawing up her slim white figure audaciously.

"That terrible plural!" said her aunt, trying hard to look severe. "And pray was—Bob—neither tall enough nor strong enough to kiss you?"

"Oh, Bob's different! I—I was really engaged to Bob for a little while, you know."

"And did he kiss you?"

"I never kiss and tell," said Lesley, looking mischievous and with a little impudent uplifting of her chin that



her aunt was beginning to know. "Auntie, don't you think it's rather silly to sit here asking me rude questions when that lovely park is simply spoiling for me to go and walk in it?"

"This is very wrong when you don't mean to marry the man," said her aunt, determined not to smile and to rejoice the heart of the graceless young woman before her. "But you evidently preferred him to the rest, so why jilt him?"

"It was a point of honor with me," said Lesley, folding her hands demurely, "to make him fall in love with me, I mean. Every one warned him against me; said I only wanted to break his heart as I had broken the other ones—they're all as right as rivets and eat and sleep like anything, auntie; not one man in a hundred has got a heart—and he didn't believe them, of course." Memory perhaps supplied the guileless look with which Lesley looked up at Lady Appuldurcombe. "But he does now."

Lady Appuldurcombe gave up the struggle and laughed heartily. "When he came and asked me if it were true," continued Lesley, "that I made all the men fall in love with me just for the pleasure of throwing them over, I said, 'Do I look that sort of person?' And then, of course, he asked me to marry him. If I had said 'No,' the people who warned him against me would never have heard of it and thought they had won!"

"Oh, Lesley, Lesley! I pity your father!"

"You needn't, auntie. He doesn't want me to marry anybody, only he stuck at Bob. For some unearthly man's reason he loves Bob, and I don't," concluded this extremely unattached young woman decisively.

"Lesley," said her aunt meditatively, "do you mean to behave like this in town?"

The girl laughed, and springing up began to dance a measure—

Moving night as all young things,
As young birds, and early wheat
When the wind steals over it.

"I'm so happy!" she said pleadingly. "Don't spoil it all by scolding me, auntie! Just think, if you had to take me on a coach when I had been crying!"

"But, my dear!"

"No one will fall in love with me here," affirmed Lesley. "It's an utterly different thing to the country, where I lived in the very midst of men! Dad's master of foxhounds, you know, and then he has big shoots, and he has capital trout fishing—any girl who wasn't a sphinx or a dolly would be bound to have heaps of lovers! And it's very catching, for men are just like sheep—what one man fancies they all want, or think they do!"

Lady Appuldurcombe shook her head rebukingly. She had not nearly got to the bottom of her inquiries yet.

"But, oh!" cried Lesley, standing in the middle of the room and throwing out her arm with a gesture of irrepressible youth and light heartedness, "it's so fascinating to make a man fall in love with you! Once you take a real interest in the game you can't stop, and—"

She smiled, as at pleasant memories, looking straight before her, and her long arms fell at her side.

"It must be perfectly delightful for the men, I am sure," said her aunt, with real displeasure. "Well, I give you warning, Miss Lesley, that if you try any of your tricks on here I shall pack you back to Malincourt at an hour's notice."

Lesley came near and looked coaxingly at her with those eyes, exactly the color of riverside forget-me-nots and set about with curly black eyelashes, that were perhaps the most uncommon beauty of her face.

"You can't stop it, dear," she said, kneeling down beside her, "the men being nice to me, I mean. I am Lady Appuldurcombe's niece, you know, and—"

"I give you up," said her aunt, spreading out two elegant hands, palms downward. "But, to turn to a more agreeable subject, who has educated you, my dear, on the subject of clothes?"

"It isn't another subject. It's me," said Lesley earnestly. "That is where I have always scored over the other girls—besides knowing such lots of men. I don't do anything. It's my clothes and my hair—the way it's dressed, I mean. It's the rarest thing in the world to find a well dressed head in the country!"

"It is a woman's first duty," said Lady Appuldurcombe, with real solemnity. "But you are very young to know it. Then it is not merely choosing the right clothes or going to the right people. It's the way you wear them that's everything—and where did you pick up that way, child? It isn't all your figure."

"I know an awfully clever woman," said Lesley, her eyes kindling, "and among other things she gave me this advice: Always wear white if you can and as long as you can, but if you don't dress all of one color never mix up your colors any more than you would mix your wine, or in furnishing a room—she has given me no end of wrinkles about things."

"And who is the woman?" said Lady Appuldurcombe approvingly. "Really, my dear, you are fortunate in such a neighbor, buried as you are."

"Lady Cranstoun." The name came out with a certain timid defiance. "I have heard of her," said Lady Appuldurcombe coldly, with whom there was never any question of knowing or not knowing certain people.

"She had an accident in the hunting field this year," continued Lesley proudly and coldly, "and she will have to lie down for the rest of her life."

"She had a good thing," said Lady Appuldurcombe, with a disengaged air, as if uninterested in the subject.

"And a husband who ruined her life," said Lesley, with flashing eyes and intense energy. "Perhaps if I had never known her I should not be so hard on the men as I am today."

She walked to the window and stood looking out. Her aunt could only see the back of a raven dark little head, that, for all its artful dressing, would break rebelliously, now and then, into curls.

"And so she chose your dresses for you, my dear?" said Lady Appuldurcombe, "and your maid. And she has done it very cleverly, I must say. But how did you manage that gown you had on last night?"

"A pattern bodice to Mason," said the girl, in a singularly lifeless tone. "The dress only arrived here after dinner last night. I love her," she broke out passionately. "You must not say anything against her to me, auntie, please, for I could not bear it."

Lady Appuldurcombe had moved away to her writing table, where, every morning, she was busy with the business of a woman of fashion, who can always make time for what she pleases.

"You could not have a safer guide than Lady Cranstoun in—clothes," she said dryly.

"Auntie," cried the girl, "is there any such thing as real Christianity in the world—one single Christian woman? You know her story—how she

committed one fault—one; now she married a brute the first time, then left him for a man who treated her worse."

"That looks rather as if it were Lady Cranstoun's fault, does it not?" said Lady Appuldurcombe, arranging the writing materials before her, but her face was grave. She was thinking it was no wonder Cecilia's child had been up to so many tricks with such companionship as her father had suffered her to fall into.

"We shall never agree on this point, auntie," said the girl in young, vibrating tones. "I shall always stand up for the women, through thick and thin, and, if I can ever do one good turn, I will. When I see the suffering caused by men!"

"And when I see the suffering caused by women," said Lady Appuldurcombe softly.

"I've got to see it yet. Meanwhile"—"Meanwhile, my dear, go down to the drawing room and try to forget you are very angry with me just now. Ronny is seeing about a horse for you, I know, so you will have your gallop in the park tomorrow morning. We don't go down to Ranelagh till after luncheon."

The door closed. Lesley was gone. "She is a good hater," said Lady Appuldurcombe as she dipped her pen in the ink, "and a warm friend," she added in the same breath.

CHAPTER IV.

Ranelagh nowadays stands in much the same relation to Hurlingham as a rustic young beauty in a cotton gown washing her face in the morning dew does to a court belle all powder and patches and trailing, brocaded skirts, and the world seems to prefer the rustic for the present—but will it last?

The quaint house, through which you pass to the grounds, sets your thoughts and memory working, and many a famous scene rises unbidden to the eye, but to young folks who have not destroyed the pleasures of reality by the overstudy of books Ranelagh is simply a charmingly sylvan spot conveniently near town, in which one might spend a few hours very pleasantly without the inducements of those eccentric sports that everybody has ostensibly come to see.

By the time Mr. Yelverton had brought his team, with a flourish, round the wide sweep of grass opposite the seats arranged for spectators, the little hurt had gone out of Lesley's heart and that pucker from her brow which had made Ronny shake his head at his mother in a way that the latter felt unkind when they were starting.

Lesley was herself again—a most refreshing self, judging by Yelverton's fits of laughter and the occasional difficulties he had got into coming down, through listening to her, instead of minding his own business.

Luckily the horses knew theirs, and when at last they stopped Ronny climbed up behind the box seat and asked the two what they had been laughing at.

Lesley refused to tell, and Mr. Yelverton backed her up, while his mother, now the grooms were gone, was at liberty to impart such information as she thought fit to the men on the coach, who displayed a great thirst for information about "the lovely Malincourt," as the world had already named her.

"She has a will of her own, and she had never heard of Ronny in her life," she confided, by and by, to a vieille mustache, when the others had got down to examine the ponies and dummies and other odds and ends that make gymnastics such a huge joke to the lookers on.

"And now she won't listen to him," said the old boy, grinning and looking at the three before him and thinking that Master Ronny, who had gone scot free all his life, might get a rap from a slip of a girl over the knuckles yet.

"I believe you were laughing at my expense," Ronny was insisting, and addressing the back of Lesley's head. "You!"

Lesley turned a little, scornful face ever so slightly toward him, the face upon which, she instinctively felt, he was always looking for those marks that the kisses of half a county should, by rights, have left upon it.

"I shall call you Aristides," she said. "Didn't the people banish him because they were sick of hearing of his virtues?"

The words were rude, but a certain quality in her voice made them merely piquant.

"Meaning that I'm a dull dog," said Ronny imperturbably. "Well, so I am. But I'm very tenacious too. What were you laughing at?"

Lesley glanced down and saw Cynthia walking past. This, then, was the reason she could not dislodge him.

"If you really must know," she said "we were talking about—frills."

Yelverton threw himself back and laughed. He had met nothing so much to his taste as Lesley the entire season. "Frills!" repeated Lesley solemnly, who, like a real woman, wanted to visit on Ronny some of the discomfort his mother had caused her that morning.

"You men are so fond of them. You like heaps and heaps of them, and the more frills and the more lace we can cram on to our skirts the nicer you think we look and the more you love us! I'm sure that half the wife desertions and domestic tragedies in the world are caused by a scarcity of frills. It's the contrast, I suppose, of your strength and the frivolity of our—frills that intoxicates you!"

"Pon my word, Miss Malincourt," said Mr. Yelverton gravely, "I've often thought that it's all that foam of lace that makes the dancing girls catch on so!"

"You've hit the right nail on the head. It's not them we love; it's their frills! Just as the more respectable a woman is the less frill and the more leg she shows in the street."

But Lesley did not seem to hear, and Ronny, at the risk of breaking his neck, had precipitously descended and was seen marching off with disgust strongly

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Lesley drew in her breath.

"I've done it now!" she said, nodding and looking up into the kind, ugly face of her companion like a naughty child who is asking a bigger and a naughtier one what he thinks her punishment will be.

"I did it on purpose, you know, to shock him. You'll forget it all, every word, won't you?"

"Pray, what harm was there in it?" inquired Mr. Yelverton stonily. "You should hear some of 'em talk!"

"Only I'm not some of 'em," said Lesley coldly, and lifting her proud little head after her own distinctive fashion. "You were telling me when Major Kilnmurray came?"

"About that bay mare? She's ripping. If I bring her round to Park lane tomorrow at 10, will Lady Appuldurcombe mind your trying her?"

"Of course not," said Lesley, then remembered that she was, to a certain extent, baggage to be disposed of as her temporary owners pleased.

"When are they going to begin?" she exclaimed. "It seems a lot of running about and nothing done. Like a Punch and Judy show with dog Toby and the baby left out!"

Mr. Yelverton grinned. "Wait till you see the Johnnies being rigged up in fancy dress by their dames," he said. "It is silly. That's why people like it. Makes them feel so superior, you know. It's when they're asked to enjoy things a cut above 'em and feel small they get mad. Here they come, at last!"

Lesley leaned over as the ponies dashed past, then clapped her hands.

"That was clever!" she said as one of the riders, going at full speed, picked off, with a long spearlike weapon, the rings suspended from a wooden staple on his left. "And that was stupid," she added as the other man missed the ring on the right. "Let us get down." And, without waiting for the ladder, she did so, with an nimbleness and dexterity that argued at once a long acquaintance with coaches and joints of extreme suppleness.

"I believe you drive a team yourself," said Mr. Yelverton, when he had joined her and Lady Appuldurcombe was also descending at her leisure.

"No, but a friend of ours, Mr. Heath"—she stopped abruptly—"has, and dad and I often go out with him on it."

"Same old game," he thought. "Where there's a pretty girl there's sure to be a coach—no, I mean!"

This was the last he saw of Lesley for some time. She was pounced upon, appropriated, divided and introduced till she began to think of climbing the coach again, just to get rid of these men, who all seemed to her exactly alike and left no permanent impression on her mind.

Once she saw Cynthia de Salis at a little distance, who did not appear to see her. She was dressed in white, and her beauty had the same troubling effect on Lesley's mind that it had on so many others.

"I should go mad about her if I were a man," Lesley thought, "but what a pity she has that dash of red in her hair! Red haired women are so terribly faithful! What were you saying, excellency?" to her friend of overnight, who had quietly made his way to her.

"That it's a pity Kilnmurray is not riding today."

"Would his dignity stand being dressed up by his 'lady' in fancy costume, like those men over there?" inquired Lesley scornfully.

"Well, we should have the treat of seeing him ride, anyway."

"And can he ride?" There was keen interest in Lesley's tone, for, if she hated men, she adored horses from the bottom of her soul.

The men surrounding her stared. "Don't you know," said one of them,

"that Ronny Kilnmurray is the best gentleman rider in England?"

Lesley stamped her little foot on the soft grass and vowed she must have tea or die.

But that stamp of the foot meant—"I'm sick of Ronny, and his bravery, and his riding, and his perfection as a son. Hasn't he got a weakness anywhere? It almost makes one want to see faulty old Bob!"

CHAPTER V.

The clock pointed at five minutes to 10, and Lesley, in hat and habit—the waistcoat was really the most swagger part of the whole concern—was leaning over the balcony, sharply criticising the points of a neat hack that was being slowly led up and down outside for her inspection.

She shook her head at last decisively and longed to see Ronny, to tell him that, if he did know how to ride, choosing a horse for a lady was a matter to which she could very easily show him the way.

As the clock struck the hour Mr. Yelverton appeared with a groom behind him, leading a matchless bay mare, who picked her steps delicately and arched her neck, her coat shining like satin in the sun.

"You beauty!" cried Lesley from the bottom of her soul in ecstasy. Yelverton looked up to the balcony, flushing all over his ugly, honest face at sight of her.

"I'm so glad you like her, Miss Coquette," he said eagerly, then glanced doubtfully at the horse Ronny's groom led up and down. "Won't you come down and try her?"

"You can take that horse away," said Lesley, waving a slender majestic arm in the direction of the stables to Ronny's groom, and the man, wondering, obeyed, though not before Yelverton had said something quickly to him, to which he replied briefly in assent as he touched his hat.

Lesley ran down stairs three steps at a time and out into the road. She had not time to shake hands with Yelverton, but quite enough to stroke the mare's velvet nose and give her the bit of sugar she had made ready for Ronny's despatched beast.

As Yelverton swung her, light as a bird, into the saddle, and she stuck her foot into the stirrups and settled her skirts cleverly with one shake, the mare pricked up her delicate ears and began to dance as if infected by the frivolous atmosphere of youth that Lesley always seemed to diffuse, or possibly because she knew she had something very special on her back, but certain it is that Lesley, by voice and touch, encouraged her in her tricks till Yelverton, looking on at the delightful pair, wondered what they might not take into their heads to do next.

It would be difficult to say which settled the question, the two feminine things appeared so entirely of one mind, but while Yelverton was anxiously inquiring the whereabouts of Major Kilnmurray from Charville, who held his horse, Miss Coquette edged playfully off toward Stanhope Gate and Lady Appuldurcombe appeared on the balcony just in time to see Lesley disappearing at a smart canter down the park, with Yelverton rapidly overtaking her.

She stood looking after them in perplexity. Where was Ronny, and why was Yelverton taking his place? The sight of one of her grooms in hot pursuit of the pair rather relieved her mind. Still it was all incomprehensible and altogether wrong, thought her aunt, with some very real concern.

Of course the girl could not be expected to know the proprieties and Yelverton was about as safe a man as a girl could be seen with. Still! And then Lady Appuldurcombe thought of her brother-in-law not exactly with bless-

ing and reverted to her original assertion that she never could forgive him. One could not help loving Lesley, to be sure, but Lesley was a handful.

Some idea of sending Charville or Parker to bring the girl back crossed her mind, but that would be to make everybody ridiculous, herself included, so she sat down to her escritoire, reserving her soul in patience and only hoping that Ronny might have arranged to meet them in the Row.

Meanwhile the fair Malincourt was "going it like steam," as a very considerable number of persons, who already knew her by sight, with some amusement remarked an hour or so later.

On Yelverton's mare—that was a good deal better known by sight in town than some of the principal people in it—in Yelverton's company, quite alone—well, it was rather rapid, don't you know, but no one could deny that she rode better, dressed better and looked better than any girl who had shone in the Row that season.

The world grinned at the great Lady Appuldurcombe being caught socially tripping, and even the immovable face of her manservant behind the pair did not mend matters in the least. Yelverton, thoroughly uncomfortable, had tried to persuade Lesley to go toward a more unfrequented part of the park, but she liked the shade of the trees and to watch the people, she said, so drew up at the rails and soon had round her most of the men who had been introduced to her since she arrived in town.

She talked to them all with the grace and fearlessness that distinguished her, yet without one word or look to which Lady Appuldurcombe could possibly have taken exception, with no veil to hide the rich bloom on her cheek, the peculiar blue of her clear eyes, the swift changing emotions, all keen and delightful, that came and went on her little spirited, joyous face.

She found one or two old Somersetshire friends among the somewhat sparse crowd—men who had almost forgiven her for jilting them, just as she had entirely forgotten any case of offense they might have against her, and she was having the best of good times, while Yelverton was having the worst, when Ronald Kilnmurray rode up, by sheer force of control hiding the intense annoyance that devoured him.

"Very sorry to be so late, cousin," he said, lifting his hat to Lesley and nodding to several men in the group. "Will you find it too hot for a turn?"

And before she knew his intention he had turned her bridle rein, and they were galloping down the Row side by side.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

ANOTHER DISCOVERY.

Of Interest to Bicycle Riders.

A well known bicycle rider has made a discovery that will be good news to all who locomote on the wheel. He says:

"Since I first began to ride a wheel, which is several years ago, I have been subject to more or less chafing and irritation. Sometimes when heated the itching inside my legs would be so severe that I would feel compelled to forego riding for a time. Nothing that I tried did any material good until my attention was drawn to an advertisement of Dr. Chase's Ointment for all itching of the skin. I tried it and almost from the moment it touched the skin the itching stopped. I also find its occasional use prevents chafing. Further evidence of the efficacy of this preparation is given by Chas. Roe, foreman Central Press Agency, Toronto, who was troubled with Itching Skin of the most aggravated kind. When the skin became heated during sleep from too much clothing, would wake up with absolute pain from digging into the flesh with his nails. Chase's Ointment gave relief from the first application and permanently cured. Price 60c."