

FEVERSHAM'S CHOICE

'Upon my word, I must get married. Here I am rapidly attaining the age of eight and twenty, and scarcely have given the important subject a thought; but it is now high time.'

Thus soliloquised Grantley Feversham, as he lounged over breakfast in his apartments at Kensington.

After a reflective pause, during which his fair acquaintances had passed in review before his mind, he continued:

'I think of the many with whom, if bright eyes speak truly, I might not be an unsuccessful wooer, I prefer my cousin Isa best of all. That she is a beauty, there is no disputing, though, in my own private opinion, deprive her of a few of the toilet aids of the present day, and she would hardly surpass that natural little rose-bud, my landlady's daughter. But, in this, Isa is not different from her sex, who, I suppose, think, among the many things in which we have grown wiser than our ancestors, is that of painting the lily with success.'

Lucy Hershaw is a decidedly pretty, gentle, ladylike girl, whom you may kiss without your lips being flavoured with violet-powder. Ah! I can't help thinking at times that I am not quite indifferent to Lucy. 'Pon my life I'm sorry it is so. I'm sure it's no fault of mine,' and he glanced down with some complacency at his well-made figure. Who can rule hearts in such matters? A hopeless love must be hard to bear. Poor Lucy! Why, continued Grantley, suddenly starting from his reverie, 'what a conceited puppy I am to moralize after this fashion! How do I know further than surmise whether the girl cares for me or not? But to return to another side of my comparison: though Lucy well educated and very ladylike, may be, on the whole, prettier than Isa, she is not half the style the dash, the go. No; few in our set can equal my cousin there. She is a girl one might be proud to introduce as one's wife: so, possessing rather more than a fancy that she looks with favor on me, why, I think I'll decide upon Isa, and, as it's always well to strike when the iron's hot, I'll pay her a visit at once.'

Rising, Grantley Feversham, changing his dressing gown, took his hat and cane, and sauntered from the room.

On opening the hall door, he found himself face to face with some one about to enter—a young girl, well but neatly dressed, whose sweetly feminine and exquisitely pretty face took just a tint of a warmer glow as her eyes rested half timidly upon Grantley.

'Good morning, Miss Hershaw,' remarked the latter, gallantly. 'Like to like, they say, is the rule of nature. Thus you are abroad with the birds and flowers, who, as fairy godmothers, have bestowed music on your voice, their fresh hues on your cheek. How you must despise such useless beings as I!'

'Not at all, Mr. Feversham,' smiled Lucy trying to overcome a certain nervousness. 'Why should I? No doubt we each pursue our destined way.'

She had entered the hall, and was waiting to close the door after him; but Grantley stood a moment yet. Another compliment was on his lips, when Lucy Hershaw asked quietly:

'Did mamma ask if you would be home to dinner, Mr. Feversham?'

It was such a matter-of-fact, prosaic question, that Grantley's compliment died on his lips, and, having made an equally matter-of-fact reply, he put on his hat and went forth. When the door had closed, he stood for a moment on the broad step.

'I am sure she likes me—I am certain!' he cogitated. 'Poor, foolish girl! as if she could in her pretty, silly head conceive it possible I could marry the daughter of a lodging-house keeper!'

Here he glanced up at the house. He had a vague belief that he should see Lucy peeping out of one of the windows at him; and it was with a sensation of something like disappointment he would not have confessed to himself that he found he was mistaken.

'Bah!' he ejaculated, rather irritably, 'here is my vanity at work again. That charming droop of the white eyelids must be a habit of the girl's!'

Coming again to this conclusion, Grantley Feversham strolled into Regent Street. Here he remembered that the day previously he had heard how one of the children of a certain Mrs. Fullerton—a charming widow, and particular favourite of Grantley's—was ill. This, in its turn, recalled to him that he had promised the eldest son, a boy of six, a toy, as a reward for getting top of a spelling-class. Therefore, having paid a visit to a purveyor to the pleasures of infancy, and concealed his purchase as well as he was able in his coat pocket, he directed his steps to Gloucester Terrace, recollecting, opportunely, that as Isa had been at a ball the preceding night, she would scarcely be on view till after twelve.

On reaching Mrs. Fullerton's, and being shown into the elegantly-furnished drawing-room, to await his mistress's coming, he found Neddy Fullerton in possession of a sofa, heaped with books and toys. Grantley was liked by most children, but especially by Neddy, who, speedily clambering on his knee, was clapping his hands rapturously at the sight of a walking soldier, attired in French costume.

It was when the child's gaze was at its height that the frou frou of a lady's dress sounded in the passage, and the next moment the widow entered. Starting up, Grantley was advancing with much embarrassment, when, imperiously, she waved him off, exclaiming:

'My dear Mr. Feversham, this is really very wrong! Do not come nearer. I really cannot permit! The footman was a born idiot to let you in, after my strict orders that no one was to enter this house!'

'Not enter?' ejaculated Grantley, aghast. 'Why, whatever have I done, my dear Mrs. Fullerton, to merit such a prohibition?'

'You! Why, nothing,' answered the

pretty widow, unable to suppress a laugh. 'But, pray, do not look so concerned. The truth is, I am sorry to say, that all my children have the small-pox; and, dreading contagion, I gave positive orders that no one should be admitted.'

'Really from my heart, I'm very sorry for you, dear Mrs. Fullerton!' replied Grantley, in all sincerity. 'And have, indeed, all your little ones got the terrible disease?'

'No, not all,' rejoined the widow, glancing rather uneasily at the small olive-branch present; 'Neddy is free. But all I want at the present moment, Mr. Feversham, is your absence.'

'Very well. Good-bye, Neddy; but I shall return, Mrs. Fullerton, tomorrow, to see how you all are—you may be sure of that.'

Saying which, Grantley, much admiring and commiserating the little widow, took his leave, and proceeded direct to his uncle's residence in Bryanstone Square.

He found his aunt and cousin at home. The latter in a light mauve, gauzy dress, with the most bewitching of smiles, enhanced by the most delicate white and pink complexion. A row of innumerable little flat curls on the top of the forehead lent piquancy to the face; while a mass of dark, lustrous hair formed a perfect pyramid of a chignon on the crown of the small head. Grantley had never, in his mind, seen Isa look more lovely in his life. Neither had she ever before smiled so winningly upon him, as, almost with a species of eagerness, she extended her small, white hand in greeting.

With a certain flutter about the heart, having saluted his aunt, the young fellow approached, impulsively to press Isa's pink palm, saying:

'I'm so glad I found you at home. I feared I might not: for on my way here I just called in upon poor Mrs. Fullerton.'

With a shrill little scream, the hand which he was about to clasp was rapidly withdrawn, and Isa, looking as pale as considering the toilet aids, she was capable of exclaiming, in real terror:

'You—you been there, Cousin Grantley? What madness! Why, they have all got the small-pox!'

'Yes, I know they have,' stammered the amazed Grantley. 'I'm deucedly sorry for them ain't you? Why, what's the matter, Isa?'

'Oh! you must excuse me dear cousin,' cried the young lady, in tremendous agitation. 'It's—it's very inconsiderate of you to have gone there, when you meant to call here. Oh! suppose you were to bring the infection to us! Perhaps you have done so already! I do dread it so! I—I am so frightened. Do, dear Grantley, go home and change your clothes; burn them, or—something of the kind people do in such cases; till then—you must pardon me, cousin—I really dare not trust myself near you. I am all in a tremble now. Do go away, and then come back.' And with certainly nothing unbecoming in her manner this time, Isa fled from the room.

In amazement, Grantley looked after her, speechless, till his aunt's breaking the silence, recalled him to himself.

'Really, my dear nephew, Isa is perfectly right,' she said reproachfully. 'You were wrong, indeed.'

'Yes, I was. I never thought about that,' rejoined Grantley, with penitential moodiness. The best reparation, my dear aunt, that I can make will be to go and change my clothes, as she bade me. So good-morning! Do tell Isa how sorry I am.'

Taking a hasty farewell, Grantley returned home, but not to change his clothes. A heavy depression had settled like a cloud about him, and he forgot all about them. His spirits, so light and happy, had been considerably dashed by the behavior of his pretty cousin.

'Yet she was quite right. Oh! yes, perfectly,' he reflected. 'Only fancy if she did catch the malady and lose her beauty!'

Perhaps it was the thought of the harm he might have done that made Grantley Feversham so desponding, so gloomy.

Dinner passed off rather slowly, and too lugubrious to care for society, he did not stir out again that day. Indeed, from his aunt's manner, he felt something like a Pariah, whom anyone would avoid.

As the evening advanced, Grantley only grew more miserable. Since that idea of selecting a wife, how cold and solitary the place appeared! No doubt it was its drear look which made him shiver so, and he did not shiver, as it with an ague.

'I have caught cold somewhere,' he thought; then he started, and grew a little pale, as an unpleasant idea occurred to him. Then he continued irritably: 'Boh! What an idiot I am! I shall go frightening myself into it if I don't take care. I'll go to bed early, and shall be all right tomorrow.'

But a restless night led to no such fortunate result. His pulses beat with fever, yet a languor was upon him he could not shake off.

'I've got it, by Jove!' he thought, with a startled throb at his heart; and requesting the presence of Mrs. Hershaw, a pleasant ladylike lady of fifty, he begged that a doctor might be fetched.

On the medical man's arrival, Grantley watched him very carefully, listened to his instructions, then thought: in much real concern: 'I pray Heaven that I have not given it to dear Isa! I don't think I could for she never let me come near enough. But—but if I have, I'll never forgive myself.'

One or two weary days followed, which seemed very solitary, lying there alone, save for the occasional presence of Mrs. Hershaw; for, save his uncle's family, Grantley had no relations, and how could he expect anyone to come near him now? He suspected Mrs. Hershaw, too, would soon, as he requested her, procure a nurse, and leave him to the hands of strangers—strangers, with no kind, loving face about him. Why had he been so assinine not to marry before? Why were men bachelors?

These thoughts were upon him when



there ensued a long blank, in which he was unconscious of everything. Then he awoke, prostrate, weak and languid, to find the kindly face of the gray-haired Doctor leaning over him. It was the latter's genial voice, too, which first fell on his ear.

'Well, how do you feel now, my boy? Better, eh?—much better? Yes; we have brought you through, you see. It's been a hard fight; but we have brought you through. You'll do capitally now.' I say we, he added, smiling, 'for without this brave little nurse here, I know not what I should have done. She has been my helping-hand in everything; untiring in her watching night and day. Faith, she has beaten her mother and me both at the work.'

He had caught hold of some one's hand, and drew its owner forward. Languidly, with the apathy of sickness, Grantley looked up, then started just a little, with something of a pleasurable feeling he scarcely understood, as his eyes rested upon Lucy Hershaw, her face ablaze with crimson, which she strove to hide with one small hand, as she exclaimed, reproachfully and in tears, while endeavoring to free the other.

'Oh, Dr. Stanmore! You promised never to tell. You—you are very unkind!'

And with a burst of tears, breaking away she fled from the room, as Grantley, too weak yet for thought, but conscious of having experienced a happiness the nature of which he could not well realize, fell into a light sleep. The first thing, however, that recalled to him on waking was Lucy's sweet, blushing face. He had not been left to strangers. No; Lucy had not thought of her beauty, nor the danger she ran in being near him.

This, somehow, recalled his Cousin Isa to his remembrance, and he wondered within himself how he ever could have thought her better looking than Lucy Hershaw.

When was he to see the sweet face of his nurse again? Not very soon, it appeared; for he found himself, to his surprise, left entirely to the care of Mrs. Hershaw, who, when he asked about Lucy, always had some natural excuse for her absence.

Then, when he grew more capable of thinking, it flashed across him that Lucy had felt his secret had been disclosed by that vivid blush, those falling tears, and in maidenly shame and modesty, was keeping away from him.

'Then I must wait till I can get up and do it,' he reflected.

A day or two after Grantley had come to this opinion, he was awakened from a light doze by a whispered conversation going on in his room. Arousing himself, he found it was Mrs. Hershaw, who was saying:

'Nonsense, Lucy! I tell you, Mr. Feversham's asleep. Surely you can step in and bring those things, for my hands are full.'

There seemed an instant's further demur; then a light footfall sounded in the apartment, and approached a side-table.

Feigning sleep, through his half-closed eyes, Grantley saw it was Lucy. On reaching the table she cast a hurried scared look in his direction; then, apparently feeling assured he was asleep, on tiptoe drew near the couch on which he lay.

Grantley remained motionless till she was close enough, then, by a quick movement, he had caught her dress—her hand. With a cry she started back; but he would not release her.

'Lucy—dear Lucy,' he exclaimed, earnestly, 'you must not go. For days past I have been dying to see you. Lucy, I want to ask you if you will attend upon me through life as you have done now—if you will give me the right to attend so upon you if you will be my wife?'

'Mr. Feversham,' she answered firmly, though her form trembled and her eyes were downcast, 'you are too weak and ill yet to be aware of what your request implies. You feel grateful for what has been done, and do not consider what you say. It will be different when you are well. Please let me go.'

'I know what I consider and mean Lucy.'

He was up in an instant; the greatest pleasure of his life was to obey that musical voice.

'What a naughty boy you are!' laughed Lucy, as, taking a comb from her hair, she drew it through his long, fair whiskers: 'you promised to use my eyes as a mirror; but you certainly have not done so, else you never would have let your hair get into this state. Now come with me.'

Rewarding her with a kiss, he obeyed. Holding his arm in hers, she led him into the house, upstairs, into her dressing room—yes, up to the very glass.

'There, sir,' she exclaimed, with pretty sternness, 'now look at the hideous man I have been generous enough to love.'

He did so in perfect bewilderment. 'Why, Lucy,' he ejaculated, 'it's all gone!'

'Of course,' she cried, clapping her hands gleefully. 'They were not scars as you believed and as I did at first, but only marks that would speedily disappear after frequent exposure in the open air. So you see, sir, you are handsomer, it possible, than ever; though handsome, or seamed, scared, and even hideous, you never, can be dearer to your wife, who can give you no more love, as she bestowed it all upon you from the first.'

There was but one way to reply to such

he replied, 'which is that whatever the doctor tells me not to do that I shall do; and, in fact, in every way try to be as ill as I can, if you will not confess you love me.'

It is to be imagined that Lucy must finally have confessed as much, for the next words of Grantley which are recorded were:

'And now, Lucy, that you are to be my little wife, I must take great care of you. Therefore, my orders are that you go instantly into the country, get as much fresh air as you can, and rub off all the close, bad air of the sick-room. I would not for worlds have that angelic, kindly face disfigured and changed as mine.'

'You're changed, disfigured!' she exclaimed. 'You are mistaken.'

'No, I am not,' he interrupted, smiling. 'It is no good to deceive me; for this morning, when all were downstairs, I managed to get into my sitting-room and look at myself in the glass. I am changed very much, Lucy.'

'No—no,' she murmured; not changed in the least to those who love you.'

It was soon after this that, by the Doctor's advice, Grantley began to go much into the open air; but he, once so handsome, felt a reluctance to show himself as yet in a crowded thoroughfare, therefore selected the adjacent suburbs for his walks. It was thus that one day he encountered his aunt and cousin out driving.

'I had better speak to them,' he thought 'the Doctor says there is no fear of contagion now.'

Signing for the coachman to stop, he approached. Ah! how could he ever have thought Isa so beautiful? How could he have fancied she ever loved him? If he had still thought so, that start, that glance of ill-concealed dread, which went like a stab to his heart, would have proved to him the contrary; and, saddened at finding the idol he had revered merely common and rather selfish clay after all, he drew back, and after a brief greeting, saw them drive on.

He no longer cared for Isa. No, he had discovered that days ago; but her want of sympathy, her selfishness, stung him. She had only cared for his handsome looks; how ugly he must appear to her now! Rather gloomily, owing to this meeting, he returned home, where, going to a mirror and having minutely contemplated his features covered with red scars, he said: 'Lucy, little woman, how can you find it in your heart to love so hideous a fellow as I! What a generous, affectionate, unselfish girl you must be! Look at all these red marks!'

Quickly she had glided up to him, and turned the mirror with its face to the wall, then laughingly placing a hand on each of his shoulders and looking up in his face, she said:

'Look, dear Grantley,—she was rather timid in pronouncing that name as yet—'at your reflection in my eyes; do you see those marks there?'

'No, darling,' he rejoined, clasping her fondly to him, 'nor feel them either. Henceforth I'll use no other glass than my wife's bright eyes.'

'Will you promise to keep that vow for the next month?' she laughed.

'Yes, willingly,' he answered. And he did so.

A few days after, Grantley having imperatively been ordered out of town, and as imperatively refused to go without Lucy accompanied him as his wife, they were quietly married, when they started for Westmoreland, taking up their abode in a picturesque cottage on the borders of a lake, and embowered in roses and jasmine. Lucy having first, amid much laughter, banished therefrom every glass save that in her dressing-room.

Here nearly a month had glided happily away, when one afternoon, as Grantley was indolently lying on the grass smoking, and thinking what a confoundedly lucky fellow he was to possess such a wife as Lucy, the latter, looking charmingly fresh, pretty and ladylike, came tripping gaily over the lawn.

'Grantley—Grantley!' she exclaimed, 'I have got something to show you! Be quick!'

He was up in an instant; the greatest pleasure of his life was to obey that musical voice.

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a pretty speech, and Grantley replied that way.

The next London season, Feversham introduced his wife, under Mrs. Fullerton's chaperonage, to society. Her quiet, natural beauty and ladylike bearing made a great sensation, and, as she moved, the admired, and, better still, in some cases the beloved of her 'set,' Isa Falkland—who remained single several years after, then married some one for whom she did not care, could not help feeling a pang of regret that, though thinking to much of her own beauty, she had lost—for the fact soon worked out—the chance of holding that place by the side of her cousin, whom she had always liked, now filled by the loving, womanly, unselfish daughter of a 'lodging-house keeper,' Lucy Hershaw, Grantley Feversham's Choice.

POST OFFICES AND POSTMEN.

All the old fogies in Britain howled in chorus when Sir Rowland Hill proposed to introduce cheap postage.

'Don't even think of it,' they cried. You will have everybody writing letters on all sorts of subjects. Mercy only knows what seeds of heresy and sedition may be scattered over the country. Besides, the clerks will be worked to death, and the post offices burst with the weight of the mails.'

Thus, you see, the very fact that cheap postage would be a great public convenience was urged as a reason why the people should not have it. What is in the millions of letters gathered and distributed by the postal officials every day? Glad tidings; news of weddings, deaths, disgrace triumphs, misery, joy, uncounted things, personal, and concerning business; written in many hands, many languages.

It is all the same to the postman. He is responsible only for the prompt and correct delivery of what is entrusted to him. Good news and bad are alike to him. The address, not the contents, is the point of concern with him.

Is not the blood in your body in some respects like the mail service? Its working days is twenty-four hours long; it has no holidays. It carries tiny particles of matter to every part of you from head to heels. These particles should give you life and energy, and they do, if you are healthy. But the blood will carry poisons of disease also, as readily as the postman will deliver a black-bordered message of death. Read an ordinary letter showing how it is:—

'I was always healthy up to the summer of 1887, when I began to feel weak and languid. My appetite was poor, and after meals I had pain and fullness at the chest. My food seemed to do me no good, for I got weaker and weaker until I could scarcely drag myself along. I felt tremulous and nervous, hot flushes constantly coming over me. I saw a doctor and took medicines, but got no better. In this way I continued until January, 1892, when my husband read in a small book about Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and got me a bottle from Mr. Jennings, the grocer, Blackwell Heath. After I had taken one bottle I felt better. My food agreed with me, and the hot flushes and other bad symptoms abated. This led me to continue taking the Syrup until it made me perfectly well. There are thousands of women who ought to know of this remedy, as it seems so wonderfully adapted to them, especially in those conditions of the system peculiar to what is called 'the change of life.' Thankfully yours (Signed) Mrs. K. Gibson, Blackwell Heath, nr. High Wycombe, Bucks, January 19th, 1894.'

Yes, and thousands of men too ought to know of it. Indeed, thousands do know of it already; millions, indeed, all over the world. As for those who still remain ignorant of the virtues of Mother Seigel's Syrup, we are enlightening them as fast as paper, printers' ink, and the postal service can do it.

Now, to our illustration once more. The stomach is the post-office from which the red carrier in the veins obtains his matter for distribution. If the stomach is sound and healthy he takes from it the substances which keep up our general health and vigour. But—mark now—if that organ is full of poisons, created by indigestion and dyspepsia, he takes those too and spreads the seeds of local ailments all over the system.

This was Mrs. Gibson's trouble, as it is the trouble of three-quarters of the women in the civilised world. Nerves are racked with pain, life made a misery, and death anticipated as a deliverance, all through that one disease. It is fountain head of nearly all complaints. Cleanse it, purify it, and Postman Blood will have none but welcome messages to carry. To bring this about is the business of Mother Seigel's Syrup; and Mrs. Gibson is only one more added to the multitude who gratefully testify to its success.

Spying on a Princess.

The London Daily News suggests that there may be such a thing as using the Röntgen rays too much and too often. It is all very well to look through a deal door, which Sam Weller protested he could not do, but it is another thing to pry into the antecedents of a young lady of royal lineage, resting for the moment under unjust suspicions.

Every one knows that spurious mummies have from time to time been palmed off upon the public, and a doubt arose in a Vienna museum as to the validity of one daughter of the Pharaohs in their collection. It occurred to them, in view of the general hollowness of life, that the young lady might have been manufactured in Birmingham. So they turned the Röntgen rays upon her, and saw at once through her many folded wraps the amulets which the Egyptians placed upon the bosoms of their dead.

Their suspicions were entirely allayed, but, as the newspaper suggests, it is little hard that, even after two thousand years, a lady should be accused of imposture.

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