

LOVE AND LAW.

By the author of BONNY'S LOVERS.

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CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

"Is that all?" Miss Branscombe's look seemed to say, and her color came back and the frightened look faded out of her eyes. I wondered what she had dreamed.

Another green-eyed dinner was scarcely over when my summons came. Miss Branscombe started to her feet with a suppressed cry, and passed swiftly from the room before me.

"Only Mr. Fort, I was to say." The butler hesitated, looking anxiously at Miss Elmslie. "I beg your pardon, ma'am, but the message was particular."

"Poor dear child!" murmured Miss Elmslie, rising and looking helplessly at me. "What can I do—it is too late, I am afraid."

"Will you leave it to me?" I said gently. "Perhaps I can persuade Miss Branscombe."

"Yes, yes," she exclaimed, laying her trembling hand on my arm—"you will persuade her."

Those hours of anxious watching and enforced confidence had thrown down the barriers of unconventionality, and made us more intimate than months of ordinary intercourse would have done. Both the elder and the younger lady turned to me in their loneliness and their sorrow; already I had taken my place as a friend with them.

In the corridor outside the sick-room Miss Branscombe was standing in the recess of a window wringing her hands and sobbing pitifully.

"Mr. Fort," she exclaimed, "they will not let me see him! Tell him that I am here—surely they will not be so cruel as to let him die without a word to me at the last! And I was like his own child. I must—oh, I must see him again before—!" Sobs choked her voice.

I placed her gently on the window-seat.

"If you will wait patiently for ten minutes, Miss Branscombe," I said, "I will come back for you."

"And Charlie, my cousin," she said—"you will not forget?"

flattered myself, soften the blow to Miss Branscombe, or at least I might give her an explanation which should mitigate her anger against myself, and account for what I dreaded she would regard as a breach of trust.

But Miss Branscombe remained invisible. Her cousin reported that she was quite overcome by her grief, and would not as yet hear of consolation.

The day, which had been brilliantly fine in the early part, clouded over toward the afternoon, and rain—a gentle, balmy summer rain—fell softly, but without intermission. The change was more in unison with the spirit of the moment and the hushed silence of the darkened house; and as I sat in the library, busied with some writing for Miss Elmslie, the musical rhythm of the raindrops, pattering softly down on the laurel and berberis leaves outside the open window, seemed to me like tears shed for a good man's loss.

Miss Elmslie came in and out with a hushed tread, and gave me instructions in a subdued voice, sometimes staying to talk of the dead man upstairs—of his virtues and consistent life, his trials and disappointments—and, at last, in natural sequence, of Charlie, the scapegrace, and of Nona, the child of Col. Branscombe's youngest brother.

"Poor Charlie!" she said, shaking her head. "He was always the one bitter drop in Harold Branscombe's cup. He idolized the boy—such a beautiful angelic-looking creature—he was so like the sister poor Harold loved and never forgot—and he spared neither trouble nor expense in his education. Charlie was to be the heir, to carry on the old name, and Nona—well, he had his hopes and dreams for the dear girl. But Charlie ruined all; he nearly broke poor Harold's heart, and upset all his plans. Nothing could mend the boy; there seems to be a sort of mad fever in his blood—I don't know where he gets it. He's as wild to-day as he was six years ago. Only Nona—in her youth and inexperience, dear child!—clings to the hope of his

ever being better. All the rest of us have long since given him up."

"Miss Branscombe is attached to her cousin?" I ventured.

"They have been like brother and sister, you know," Miss Elmslie replied quietly. "Nona cannot give him up. But there is the dinner bell." She seemed glad to change the conversation, I thought.

Miss Branscombe did not appear at the dinner table. The evening was still wet, but close and sultry. Miss Elmslie and I took tea together in the large drawing room, which looked so empty and desolate now; and, while the gentle old lady babbled on of the stories of the house, I sat just behind the lace curtains at the open window, looking out over the lawn toward the encircling belt of shrubbery. It was a dark moonless summer night, and late enough now for the shrubs to show blackly against the pale sky-line.

I had quite lost the thread of Miss Elmslie's somewhat monotonous talk, dreaming as I was of many things, with a pervading sense of vague pain and unrest new to my experience, and due perhaps to the melancholy scenes in which I had just taken part.

Suddenly it seemed to me that a white shadow flitted across the bottom of the lawn toward the trees, and was lost in the darkness. Was it fancy? I wondered, looking intently toward the spot where the figure had disappeared. I was not subject to fancies of this kind, and I at once made up my mind to investigate the phenomenon.

With an excuse to Miss Elmslie, I went to the hall for my overcoat, and, letting myself out by a side door, I made my way cautiously over the grass to the spot where I had seen—or fancied I had seen—the white form appear and disappear.

There was nothing but the shadows and the trees and the patter of the soft-

falling raindrops on the green leaves. So my eyes, keen and sure as I had always considered them, had played me false. I turned back toward the house, taking this time one of two or three narrow winding paths within the wood. My footsteps made no sound on the damp grass-grown ground. All at once the perfume of a cigar was wafted toward me. Then I was not alone in the darkness; somebody else had a fancy for an evening airing—one of the gardeners or workmen, no doubt, on his way from some errand at the Hall. But the shrubberies lay in the front of the house, while the servants' offices were all, as I knew, at the back. And, besides, my educated senses told me that that cigar was of the finest quality, not likely to be smoked by any but a connoisseur. The rector was a non-smoker, and no other neighbor would, I knew, have the entrée to the shrubbery.

My curiosity was thoroughly roused, and the instinct of my profession enlisted in the discovery of the little mystery.

Presently the sound of subdued voices—a man's and a woman's—reached my ears. Then I had not been fancy-tricked—some assignation of a tender nature had lured the fitting figure hitherward—a maid-servant from the house, no doubt. But the fine Havana? Well, that was no affair of mine; I would not at all events play the eavesdropper.

It was in carrying out this laudable resolve that I turned into another path—a shorter cut to the house, as I believed, in my slight knowledge of the place. It must however have brought me nearer to the lovers, for now the manly voice was so raised that the subject of what appeared to be an angry discussion only just missed meeting my ears, and sobs from the female were distinctly audible. The course of true love was not running smoothly. I concluded, as I retraced my steps. At this moment the cars ceased and a feminine voice took up the response, pleading, remonstrant, and I was conscious of a sudden shock which brought me to a standstill. The sweet, low tones were a familiar to me—they were those of Nona Branscombe.

Nona Branscombe, my ideal of innocence and womanly purity, my impersonation of Una, keeping a clandestine appointment at night—with her uncle's corpse hardly yet cold, too; hoodwinking her chaperon with a pretense of illness and overwhelming grief! Oh, the shame and the pity of it! Oh, the shame and the pity!

I did not stop to ask myself why the blow should be such a crushing one to me—why a doubt of the innocence and goodness of Nona Branscombe should seem to make the world stand still, and plunge my whole outlook into darkness; I hurried blindly back to the house, losing myself half a dozen times among the tortuous shrubbery paths and shaking the raindrops from the laden branches in heavy showers as I went. I had reached the terrace on which the side door by which I had quitted the house opened, my hand was on the lock, when another applicant for admittance glided out of the shadows and stood by my side.

(To be continued.)

DOG IDIOTS.

Graphic Description of the Mongrels That Thrive in Constantinople.

I never saw so much mud, such unspeakable filthy streets and so many dogs as Constantinople can boast, but nowhere have I seen them described in a satisfactory way—so that you knew what to expect, I mean, says the Woman's Home Companion. In the first place, they hardly look like dogs. They have woolly tails like sheep. Their eyes are dull, sleepy and utterly devoid of expression. Constantinople dogs have neither masters nor brains. No brains because no masters. Perhaps no masters because no brains. Nobody wants to adopt an idiot. They are, of course, mongrels of the most hopeless type. They are yellowish, with thick, short, woolly coats and much fatter than you expect to find them. They walk like a funeral procession. Never have I seen one frisk or even wag his tail. Everybody turns out for them. They sleep, from twelve to twenty of them, on a single pile of garbage, and never notice either men or each other unless a dog which lives in the next street trespasses. Then they eat him up, for they are jackals as well as dogs, and they are no more epicures than ostriches. They never show interest in anything. They are blasé. I saw some mother dogs asleep, with tiny puppies swarming over them like little fat rats, but the mothers paid no attention to them. Children seem to bore them quite as successfully as if they were women of fashion.

Nature's Influence on Man.

From the Chicago News: "Nature exercises a wonderful and mysterious influence over men. Certain plants are poisonous to some folks and medicines to others." "Yes, and my husband is always troubled with rheumatism when the grass begins to get tall upon our lawn."

Prompt Reaction.

"Oh, that horrid cat!" exclaimed the tearful young woman. "She has killed my beautiful canary! But the wretch don't seem to be injured a bit. They will look swell on my hat, won't they, though?"—Chicago Tribune.

Evidence of Greatness.

From the Chicago Record: "So many great geniuses have been fat men." "Well, sometimes it takes genius to earn three square meals a day."

CHAPTER V.—(Continued.)

It was Miss Branscombe's hood of her light mantle was drawn over her head and face, and as she came swiftly on, with downcast head, she was unconscious of my presence until she almost touched me. At the first recognition she gave a little cry and started back, the next instant she had recovered herself, and something of the womanly dignity which I had admired in her at our first meeting returned to her bearing. She made no apology or excuse for her presence there on such a night and at such an hour; she merely bowed her head with a murmured "Thank you," as I threw open the door and stood back for her to precede me into the hall. She did not, as I half expected, try to excuse or account for her late walk, but with another bow she passed on and up the wide staircase. The light from a hanging lamp fell upon her face as she turned to mount the steps, and I saw that her eyes were swollen with tears and her cheeks deadly pale. She held tightly by the carved oak balustrade too as she went slowly up and out of my sight.

"And so," I said to myself, as, haunted by a spirit of unrest, I paced the floor of my room long after midnight—"so dies the last lingering remnant of my faith in womanhood." But it was dying hard; it was hydra-headed, apparently, and sprang into fresh life as fast as I set my heel upon the last quivering fragment; and at last, when I sought my bed, I knew that neither my faith, nor a mad love, as wild and impossible as the love of the wave for the star, was dead within me. I had found a hundred excuses, a hundred reasons, which left Nona Branscombe my pure sweet ideal still; and withal, I was the most unhappy man in the United Kingdom. Had Miss Branscombe been the penniless girl her friends and neighbors had pre-

possible for Mr. Fort to remain with you until after the funeral; but it is a point I can hardly press, as he has been good enough to give us already so much of his valuable time."

"We should indeed be glad," said Miss Elmslie, looking appealingly at me.

So I was impelled by the irresistible force of fate into the current which could only bear me to disastrous shipwreck.

"I could return," I said, answering the appeal of Miss Elmslie. And oh, what a rush of dangerous joy thrilled through my veins at the thought of once more being under the same roof with Nona Branscombe! "My arrangements are made for to-day, as you know. I must run up to town; but if I can assist you by returning to Forest Lea, I will do so immediately—as soon as I have seen my partners."

"It will be the greatest comfort," Miss Elmslie assured me, with tears in her eyes. And so it was settled.

"I will drive with you to the station," the rector said, as the dog-cart came round; "I have business there. Are you a good whip? No?"—as I shook my head. "Well, I will take the reins then, Mason"—to the groom—"cut across the park while we drive round, and leave word at my house that I have gone on to Westford. We will pick you up at the end of Park Lane. The fact is," he confided to me, as soon as the man was out of earshot, "that scamp, Charlie Branscombe, has been seen hanging about the place; the purport of the poor old colonel's will will soon ooze out—if it hasn't done so already—and Master Charlie is the first capable of bullying his cousin in the quiet flush of his disappointment. It was my good old friend's last injunction that Charlie should not be admitted to the Lea, and Miss Nona is tender-hearted in that, and quarrel."

A light flashed upon me. It was



"ON THE SPOT, YES; BUT NOT IN THE HOUSE," MR. HEATHCOTE ANSWERED GRAVELY.

maturely declared her to be, there would have been neither presumption nor madness in the passion which had taken possession of me, for I was well-born, my prospects were good, and I could have entered the lists fearlessly against all comers. But Miss Branscombe, the heiress, the owner of fifteen thousand a year, was separated from me by a barrier which I recognized as insurmountable. I groaned in spirit as I remembered that my own hand had helped to raise the barrier.

And then I fell into a short troubled slumber, just as the restless twittering of the little birds beneath my window told that the day was breaking.

CHAPTER VI.

Early as it was when I descended to the breakfast room that morning, Miss Elmslie was already down and in deep and anxious conference with the rector. They ceased speaking as I entered, and Mr. Heathcote came forward to greet me.

"I am sorry you are leaving Forest Lea this morning," he said, as Miss Elmslie busied herself with the teacup. "These ladies need—er—er—in fact, some member of our sex sadly just now. I wish you could have remained."

"You are on the spot," I suggested, fighting with an impulse which tempted me to forget my duty alike to my firm and to myself, and to linger in the sunshine which could only scorch me.

"On the spot, yes; but not in the house," Mr. Heathcote answered gravely, accepting the cup of tea which Miss Elmslie offered him. "You are singularly destitute of male relatives, Miss Elmslie?" he added, addressing her.

"Yes," she sighed; "there is absolutely no one. The dear colonel represented our whole family, excepting—"

"Yes, yes!" interrupted the rector, hastily. "You are entirely unprotected, unfortunately, if wish it had been

once at the Lea, and the exercise of the tact and friendly kindness you have already shown—I bowed—"will be invaluable to us at this juncture. After the funeral, Miss Elmslie and Miss Branscombe will leave the place, and a year or two of foreign travel, with fresh scenes and associations, will, I have no doubt, make a great difference in Miss Branscombe's views and feelings. She has been brought up in a secluded way, and has seen few people hitherto. All we want is to gain time. But here is my fellow; we must hurry up to catch the 11.10 express.

The 11.10 express was a favorite train evidently. I congratulated myself on having secured a corner seat next the door, as my carriage filled rapidly. At Wivenhoe, the first stopping station, two seats—that opposite to me, on which I had deposited my black bag and the light dustcoat which I carried, and a second set next to mine—were the only ones unoccupied. The weather was warm, and I was just congratulating myself on having escaped any addition to our number, when, even as the guard's whistle sounded, the handle of the carriage door was hastily turned and a lady, evidently a good deal flustered at the narrow escape she had made of missing the train, sprang lightly in and deposited herself in the vacant place by my side.

It had all happened so suddenly—my head had been turned away at the moment of the lady's appearance—that I had only time to draw my somewhat long limbs out of her path, and none to catch a glimpse of my new neighbor before she was seated next to me.

"Allow me," I said then, offering to relieve her of the small bag and large loose cloak which she held on her knees. "There is room for these here"—indicating the opposite seat, on which my own impedimenta were piled.

She thanked me with a bow and a few murmured indistinct words; and, as I took the two articles from her hands, I caught a glimpse of her face. It was covered with a thick gray gossamer veil, such as ladies use at the seaside or for driving in the country; but the lovely hair that had escaped from beneath the large shady hat, and something in the whole bearing startled me with a wild impossible idea. Had I gone mad, or was the image of Nona Branscombe so imprinted on the retina of my eye that to me every woman must bear her likeness?

I darted another swift glance at my neighbor as I resettled myself in my place.

"They will be quite safe there," I said, pointing to her possessions, and then I stopped, breathless. It was no fond illusion of my love-sick fancy. It was Nona herself! The large limpid eyes, which even the thick gossamer veil could not hide, looked into mine for an instant with a warning deprecatory expression, the graceful head moved with the scantiest, most distant acknowledgment of any courtesy, and then turned resolutely away. Evidently Miss Branscombe did not choose to recognize me further.

I sat for the next ten minutes stunned and bewildered, watching the meadows and trees as they flew by in endless succession, and trying to steady my mind sufficiently to grasp the situation. Miss Branscombe here alone, unattended—she who had hitherto led such a carefully protected life—traveling alone; and whither? I was certain that neither the rector nor Miss Elmslie had known of her projected journey—the morning's conversation quite precluded the idea. How had she reached the station without being seen by us—the rector or myself?

(To be continued.)

TO BRING ABOUT SLEEP.

The Half Hour Before Bedtime Should Be Quietly Spent.

Difficulties in going to sleep are sometimes physical more than mental, says the Spectator. The physical, under ordinary circumstances, are due to the circulation. The following are a few practical hints: Some sleep better if sitting up with three pillows, some better with none; some with little covering, some with much. Hot drinks or a hot bath just before sleep, hot bottles to the feet, are often useful. Tobacco often increases sleeplessness. Sometimes, after long waking, a small meal will bring sleep. Some, especially invalids, will wake after two or three hours; a cup of hot, fresh tea will often send them to sleep again. Sometimes the darkness seems exciting and one can sleep with a lighted candle. Intermittent noises, as of a rattling window, are always bad, but a continuous noise is often a lullaby. Moderate fatigue aids, but exhaustion prevents sleep. Oftenest sleeplessness is mental and springs from a want of self-control. Either one subject engrosses the mind or a succession of ideas. In either case the sleepless must make the effort to stop thought. It is best done by attending continuously to some monotonous and unexciting idea which is self-hypnotism. Some count, some breathe slowly as if asleep, some look at imaginary sheep going through a gate. One of the best ways is to watch those curious appearances which come to closed eyes, a purple hare fading into a star, which becomes an irregular line, and again changes to something else. They can not be seen when first sought, but will come with a little patience. In all these the purpose is to fix the attention on some object which will arouse no associations. It requires steady effort to do this and to prevent the thoughts wandering, but exercise increases the power to succeed. The half hour before bedtime should be spent quietly.