

A FAMILY AFFAIR.

BY HUGH CONWAY.

AUTHOR OF "CALLED BACK," "DARK DAYS," ETC.

(Continued from Sunday, May 21st.)

The elder woman arranged all the other mistress as a servant leave; she prepared a place, and when the time came Beatrice found her grief lightened by all a loving woman can do for another in such a plight. Of course there was deceit—deceit seemed to have forced itself into the girl's life! There was a long visit to pay some where, a visit from which Beatrice returned a shadow of her former self. But none knew, none even guessed the cause.

Until the child was born Beatrice's prayer was that both she and it might die. Can a sadder, more pitiful prayer be framed by a woman! The truth could then be told to all. The early death would be the full expiation of her folly. The few who loved her would forgive and pity her. But her prayer was unanswered—death never even threatened mother or babe.

The child was born, the tiny head nestled on the mother's breast, and a strange new feeling awoke within her—the overpowering instinct of maternal love. Her thoughts which had once been, in case the child lived, to hate it for the father's sake, turned to pure, sweet affection for the innocent, helpless little being. So far from wishing it dead, she would not now have wished it born. When she returned to her home she left it with many tears in Sarah's charge.

For years she saw it by stealth, saw it grow more and more the picture of perfect childhood; loved it and worshipped it more each time she saw it, and at last, when she returned to her father's house, and felt that her visits to her treasure would now perform for her less and less frequent, a wild craving to have it with her always, to see it every day, every hour, awoke in her passionate heart.

Then came the second quarrel, and the new home. And even as she settled to go down to her uncle's the anxious of the daring scheme for regaining her boy framed itself in her brain, and was eventually shaped into form and acted upon with perfect success.

But the five years were passing, passing. At the end of them stood what Beatrice shrank from picturing, a convict who would come and claim his wife. Beatrice had, indeed, expected that when first arrested he would find some way of proclaiming his marriage, if only in fulfillment of his threat of dragging her name into the dirt.

Yet he made no sign. He was crafty and calculating. The term of the sentence was not to him an eternity. When it ended he knew that by keeping the secret he should be in a more advantageous position to turn matters to his own benefit. Beatrice would be well past twenty-one, and in command of a large income. He meant to be thoroughly revenged for the obstinacy she had displayed in refusing to marry him, and so find him means to buy up the forged bills, but he meant to have money also.

This is the story of the life of the last five years upon which Beatrice looked back that afternoon. These are the pictures of the man and the woman—the husband and wife—who were to meet on the morrow like foes in a deadly duel.

And over and above all this, there was another matter ever present in the girl's mind—another name which came to her lips, not in accents of hate, but love. She had attempted to deceive him, but herself. In fact, it seemed part of her punishment—the hardest part of all—that she loved Frank Carruthers. She had sobbed out the secret on the faithful Sarah's breast. She had wept through the weary hours of many a night as the thought of the utter hopelessness of love between them. His coming to Oakbury had troubled her grief. She had not only to lament "what has been," but to regret "what might have been."

Blame her if you must! Forgive her if you can! At least pity her!

CHAPTER XXII.

MAKING PROUD KNEES BEND.

Provided he is not a French journalist, whose drooping honor is cured by a scratch, a man about to fight a duel has generally preparations to make. Maurice Hervey's approaching duel being of a peculiar nature, the preparations he made were also peculiar. They consisted of inducing the room he occupied—which, in an unoccupied state, was a nice, tidy apartment—to look as disreputable and dilapidated as, with the resources at his command, it was possible. He gave no orders for his breakfast things to be cleared away, but added to the relics of the meal a bottle of whisky and a glass. He also laid a short pipe and a tobacco pouch on the table. With great satisfaction he found in a drawer a dirty pack of cards; these were also placed in a position to carry effect. He told the servant not to attend to his bedroom, just yet; so that by his leaving the door of communication between the two rooms open a visitor might have the privilege of gazing on a disheveled sleeping apartment. Given the materials at his disposal, he made a very fair effort with them.

He kept his own appearance in sympathy with the surroundings. He wore slippers which he took down to the heel. His clothes were too new to look shabby, but by putting on a solid shirt, discarding his waistcoat and cravat he managed to get within reasonable distance of his requirements.

All these preparations were inspired by an exquisite refinement of malice. Meta-phorically he meant to bring Beatrice down on her knees, and his cruelty told him that to one of her type, the process would be doubly disagreeable when it took place in such a scene.

"God!" he said, as he passed round and approved of his handiwork. "I wish I had my prison suit here. I'd don it once more for your benefit, my lady."

He gave orders that if a lady called she was to be shown up at once; then he lit a cigar and lounged in the easy chair. At five minutes to twelve, just as the man was wondering whether she would come or not, and if, in the event of her not coming, it would be well for his own interests to seek her at Haslewood House, the door opened and Beatrice stood before him. He laughed a low, mocking laugh, and without changing his lounging attitude, looked up at her.

She took it all in, the disreputable look of the place and of its tenant; he could see by the quiver of her nostril, and the look of deprecating scorn on her firm mouth. His eyes gleamed with triumph.

And she, as she looked at him, the thoughts ran through her how could she ever in her most foolish girlhood's days have loved this man—have loved him even for an hour! His features were the features she had once thought so perfect—now no human creature on the earth could have inspired her with such loathing. She did not fear him, simply because she knew the worst he could do—the heaviest penalty she could be called upon to pay. Or she thought she knew.

"Well, my affectionate wife," he said, knocking the ash off his cigar, and looking her up and down; "you've grown into quite a piece of goods, quite a tip-topper, on a piece of a swell. You haven't pined much for me, I guess."

She shivered as she heard his voice and

smile, mocking compliments, but she kept her proud eyes upon him. "You have something to say to me—say it!" She spoke sternly.

"Say! I should think it was for you to say something. You who sent me to bed with fevers for five years. You who would not stretch out a hand to save me. What have you to say?" He spoke with a vicious, bitter intonation.

She said nothing. She might have told him of misery which she had undergone—misery which she had to undergo to which his well-merited punishment was as nothing.

"Nearly five years," he went on. "Think of that—dull, dead drudgery. Week after week, month after month, year after year the same. All through you—through you! And now, my sweet wife, which do you expect me to do, to strike you or to kiss you?"

He changed his tone to that of rally, a tone more laudatory to Beatrice than that which showed his real nature. He took a step towards her as he said the last words.

"You have done both to me," she said, slowly and bitterly. "The memory of the kiss is to-day more degrading to me than that of the blow." He scowled as her scorn stung him—scowled and took another step towards her.

There was a sharp-pointed knife lying on the table. Beatrice's fingers mechanically rested themselves on the handle. "If you touch me," she said, quietly, "I think I shall kill you."

"I think I shall kill you."

The man knew she meant it. He threw himself into a chair, and laughed scornfully. "Come," he said, "let us go to business."

"Yes, business is the only question between us now."

"Sit down. I can't talk to you while you stand up there. And I've lots to say."

To show how little she feared him she obeyed.

"Now," he said, "to come to the point: what proposal have you to make? I'm your husband, and with all your put-on pride and carelessness, you know I've got the whip-hand at last."

Beatrice looked at him and again wondered how she could have ever loved this ruffian.

"I will do this," she said. "On certain conditions I will give you one-half of my income."

"And how much may your income be?"

"Two thousand five hundred a year, I am told."

"You lie," said Hervey coarsely. "It is more."

Beatrice flushed. She half rose from her seat, then returned to it without troubling to reply.

"Take it for argument's sake it is so," said the man. "Now for the conditions."

"That you never seek me, never trouble me, never make known to any one that I am your wife."

"You have kept the secret, then?"

"One other person knows it, my faithful servant."

"That hag! Of course you hoped I should die in the five years."

me and show yourself the wife of an injured husband!"

He almost shrieked the sentence. He felt he had his full grasp of revenge.

"I must think, I must think," she murmured.

"Yes, go and think. I've got to think, too. I've got to find out whether any quibble can deprive you of the money. If so, you'll have to marry me again and keep the first marriage dead. Hang me that will be even better."

"Let me go," she said.

"Yes, you can go. But come to me again five days after to-morrow. Then I'll tell you what to do. Ah, my lady, you'd better have got the money I wanted years ago. I told you at the time you were a fool."

She did not hear his last words. She had left the room. Hervey threw himself into his chair and laughed low and loud.

"Revenge and money!" he said. "I'll bring her down to the very dust. I'll make her beg on her knees for the boy before I spare her even him. Luck! was there ever such luck?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

HARRY LEARNS A NEW WORD.

I am informed, by those who ought to know, that a credit balance at one's bankers possesses great virtues as an elevator of both morals and character. That, apart from any sordid consideration or miserly joy, it enables a man to face with greater courage the smaller ills and annoyances of life, renders him less liable to many temptations, teaches him to regard his fellow-creatures with more affectionate eyes, and generally to acquiesce in the wisdom of the arrangement which made the world as it is. If this is so, the universal desire to grow rich may have for its mainspring the noblest motives.

As in nine cases out of ten a woman holds money in far greater reverence and awe than a man does, the possession of such a balance should be to her doubly gratifying and elevating. With money woman is a power. It was the weak concession, begun years ago for man's selfish ends, completed to-day for the sake of justice, that a woman has any right to hold property at all, which has led up to the demand for womanhood suffrage.

Beatrice had a very large credit balance in the hands of the family bankers, Messrs Furlong, Stephens, Furlong, Seymour & Furlong, an establishment which, for the sake of brevity, and on account of its antiquity, was commonly known as the Blacktown Old Bank. It was a very large balance; so large that it annoyed Hervey and Herbert to think of its lying at the bankers. With their praiseworthy regularity the trustees had every half year paid their niece's income to her account at Messrs. Furlong, and as Beatrice did not spend one-fifth of it the money bred with its proverbial fecundity.

Until their niece came to stay with them the Talberts had, without even consulting her, invested all surplus income in good dividend-paying preference or debenture stocks, chosen because they only paid four per cent.—no well-advised borrower should think of offering more than four per cent. Doing so creates mistrust. During the last year Beatrice had asked them to let the money lie at the bank. So at the bank it was. Hervey said not bearing a fraction of interest. It vexed him to see such waste.

Only at Christmas he had remonstrated with her. "You are simply making our friends"—several members of the elongated firm lived in the neighborhood—"a handsome yearly present. Paying one of their clerk's salary, in fact."

"Perhaps that was why Mr. Stephens was so attentive to me at dinner last week," said Beatrice placidly.

"Oh, nonsense! It's a mere nothing to them. But why should they have your money for nothing, and lend it out at seven or eight per cent.?"

Beatrice could give no reason. She simply said she wished it to remain as it was for a while. Hervey and Herbert began to wonder if she had afoot any scheme for endowing a hospital, or restoring the parish church.

However, the money lay idle and at all, and if Hervey's explanation of the method by which bankers make fortune was correct, the page in the red ball-covered ledger, headed "Beatrice Clauson," must have been a gratifying sight for the Messrs. Furlong and the rest of the firm.

One morning, the very morning which Mr. Hervey had appointed for his second interview with Beatrice—a few minutes after the respectable liveried porter had drawn the bolts of the outer doors, and so proclaimed that the bank was ready for all comers, a check for one thousand pounds, payable to "self" or "bearer," and signed "Beatrice Clauson" was handed across the broad mahogany counter to the spruce cashier.

He leaned across the counter and asked her in the politest manner:

"How'd you have it?"

Mrs. Miller would have five hundred in gold, and five Bank of England notes for one hundred pounds each. The money was counted out. Mrs. Miller buttoned the notes inside her dress. The bag of gold she placed in her pocket, where with every movement it bumped heavily but reassuringly against her leg, and in dumb but painful show proclaimed that it was safe. Then she rejoined her mistress, and the cab carried them to Blacktown railway station.

They looked to Paddington. As they wanted to compare their notes with the carriage, every traveler knows that solitude is most often found in those compartments reserved exclusively for the fair sex. This is a delicate compliment to man, but not, perhaps, fully appreciated by such meek who, after eyeing vacant seats enviously, have to enter a carriage more than three parts full of people.

conclusion that something was wrong, and set up a lady roar.

"See," said Beatrice, reproachfully, "you have frightened the boy?"

The woman grew calm at once. The blaze of fanaticism faded from her face, and she was once more the attentive nurse and faithful servant. The train hurried them onwards on their flight.

Flight! Yes, it was flight! Hervey's throat had struck home. It had carried conviction. Beatrice never doubted his assertion that although it might be impossible for him to force her to come to his side, he could legally take the boy from her. She determined to fly, leave no trace, hide for a while, and let the man in her absence do his worst.

If he told her friends the tale of the marriage it would at least save her from the pain of so doing. She had not yet settled whether to go, but she meant to-night to be out of England.

The little boy, as was usual when he appeared in public, had attracted much attention while they waited on the Blacktown platform. So great is the interest excited by such a perfect specimen of childhood that every woman and not a few men turned and looked after him. At the first stoppage a lady who saw him through the window actually fettered her husband out of the refreshment room to look at his golden hair. She was but a young wife, or she might have known better. Pleading as such admiration must have been to Beatrice, it seemed to trouble Mrs. Miller. As the train resumed its course, she turned to Beatrice.

"It must be done, my dear. It must be done."

Beatrice, who now had the boy, hugged him tightly. "I won't—I can't do it," she said.

"We shall be traced all over the world by it, my dear," said Mrs. Miller, sadly.

"Oh, Sarah! It is too cruel—too cruel! See, let us twist it up and hide it."

There with she twisted up Harry's sunny locks, turned them over on the top of his head, and fastened them with a hairpin. His cap was replaced, and very comical the boy looked with his hair growing upwards.

And very pretty he looked when, a minute afterwards, thinking this was a new sort of game, he shook off his cap, shook out the curls, and presto! down fell the glowing cloud again.

It was tucked up again. It was shaken out again—and again and again. It was fine sport for the baby, but Beatrice began to glance timidly at her maid, who shook her head ominously. "We shall be followed everywhere," she said. Beatrice sighed.

"He'll be a big boy in no time, my pretty," said Sarah. "then it must come off. Don't run the risk now. There's not such hair in the three kingdoms!"

Strange that a woman who believed so implicitly in destiny, Mrs. Miller should be in her calm moments so calculating and foreseeing.

Beatrice kissed the soft cloud, and said that was why it was such a sin. Sarah, without a word, drew out a newspaper and a large pair of bright scissors. Beatrice turned away to hide her tears.

Sarah cut a hole in the centre of the newspaper—a hole just big enough for the boy to put his head through. He did so, and thought it great fun. His blue eyes danced with delight. "Hold the corners, miss," said Sarah. Beatrice with averted eyes took up two of them in her trembling hands. This cruel work began.

Ruthless as the shears of Atropos, Sarah plied her bright blades, and the boy's glittering locks fell in soft masses on the outspread Standard. Never before had the columns of that infatigable journal gleamed so brightly. Clip, clip, clip, went the scissors, every clip seeming to cut Beatrice's heart. In five minutes the work was roughly done.

Every clip seeming to cut Beatrice's heart, and the glory of Harry's hair gone forever.

Beatrice positively sobbed. She gathered up every thread of gold, kissed and wept over the wreck, then put it away to be repaired up. She clasped her disfigured darling to her breast.

"Oh, my poor little boy!" she cried. "My little shorn lamb! Oh, it was cruel, too cruel! A cruel, wicked mother I am to you, my pet." She hugged the boy, and bewailed the loss of his curls—a loss which the late proprietor appeared to view with intense satisfaction. He was experiencing a new sensation, and at every age a new sensation is a matter of great interest.

Presently something seemed to stir Beatrice into great animation. "Mother!" she said, "mother! Listen, my pet, say after me, mother."

She smiled, his little smile, pursed up his lips, and made for the first attempt, a very fair imitation of the word. The tears streamed down Beatrice's cheeks. She kissed the boy passionately. "Say it again—say it always," she cried, "mother, mother, mother."

The little autocar, being in high good temper, consented to humor her, and all the way to London Beatrice taught her boy the new word—even made him dimly comprehend that it was in future to be the title of the person whom his lisping tongue had until now only given the name of Bee-Bo, or some such infantile rendering of the style by which he heard her addressed.

The comfort which his readiness to catch up the new word brought to Beatrice's heart almost compensated for the regret she felt at the ruthless deed which had been done by the scissors.

At their refined dinner parties it was understood that after a certain time of grace no one was to be waited for. It was their theory that keeping several guests waiting for one laggard was a breach of politeness. There were unkind people who said that the brothers would break this rule for a lord. They wronged our friends. They would have waited for no one under the rank of a duke or at least a marquis.

So that when Whittaker having struck the resonant gong and so proclaimed that lunch was ready, ten minutes passed by without Beatrice's responding to its hospitable summons, it is no wonder that Horace and Herbert began to look grave. The soup was on the table; Whittaker was waiting his master's commands. He, who from long association, felt the situation as such as they did looked absolutely sympathetic. Although he had no reason to suppose her stone deaf he ventured to suggest that Miss Clauson had not heard the gong.

The beauty of the Talberts' character was that politeness invariably triumphed over principle. Functuality was here the principle; it was outraged, yet forced for a while to submit. Horace forbade a repeated summons, and they actually waited another five minutes before they sent Whittaker to inquire for Miss Clauson. Whittaker reported that Miss Clauson, the nurse and the little boy had gone out immediately after breakfast and had not yet returned.

"Then the nursery dinner will be spoiled, too," said Horace sadly, as he seated himself and laded out the soup. Horace, with his kind heart, felt for any one who was doomed to suffer from a spoiled dinner.

After a solemn lunch the brothers waited for a while in the dining-room. They expected every moment that Beatrice would appear. They did not of course mean to scold her, but were prepared to say a few words of mild remonstrance; to show her, in fact, how the bad example of unpunctuality must demoralize an establishment.

But as Beatrice did not appear the well-meant little lecture they were tacitly preparing turned into open expressions of wonder as to why her morning ramble should be so protracted. Perhaps she had gone somewhere to lunch. Perhaps something had happened. Just as they had reached this last stage of supposition, Whittaker brought in a telegram. It was from Beatrice and sent from Oxford Circus. We are in London—Oxford Circus—will write to-night.

They were greatly surprised, and marveled on what errand could she have gone to London. No doubt it was all right. She had most likely gone to her father's. Perhaps Sir Mainway was ill. Beatrice might have intercepted a telegram and impulsively started off at once. But why take the child and the nurse? Why? There they were unable to make head or tail of the matter, so could only wait for the morning's post.

"Beatrice might have been more explicit," said Horace, looking at the telegram once more.

"Yes," said Herbert, "she had nine words to spare."

"Telegrams are one of the pests of modern life," continued Horace. "People dash off these ill-words, unpunctuated phrases instead of a proper letter. No one can write a decent letter now."

Hervey, who had the gift of writing peculiarly well-constructed and elegant, if rather too lengthy, epistles, felt keenly on the tendency of the age to conduct its correspondence by means of short, snappy sentences, after the manner of Mr. Mordie's style of talking.

"I hope she will be back soon," said Herbert. "Frank comes to us the day after to-morrow."

"He is in good health now, isn't he?"

"Splendid, I believe."

"Then I think we can give him the '58 this time the '47 is growing low."

This was not unmeaning. It was but the caution a wise man exercises over his cellar. Besides, who could complain of the delicate graduation! 1858 is a fine wine; many prefer it to 1847.

Beatrice's promised letter came in the morning. Hervey read it first. His face was a perfect blank. He read it again before he handed it to the anxious Herbert, who, although he saw from his brother's face that something strange had happened, was for once unable to make the slightest guess at the truth. Here is Beatrice's letter:

"My Very Dear Uncles: I should be ungrateful for the kindness you have shown me if I left you in any anxiety a moment longer than I could help. I sent you a telegram yesterday afternoon to show you that no evil had befallen me.

"I scarcely know what to say to you. I can at present offer no excuse for what I am about to do. I can give no explanation. When I came to Haslewood House I hoped to be able to make it my home for so long as you would keep me. Now, I find, I am forced to leave you and make a home of my own. Moreover, I am forced for a while at least to keep silence as to where that home may be. At this moment I have not even determined. It will, however, be out of England. I cannot even tell you why this must be so. Will you ever forgive me?

"Please do not fear on my account. I am growing old and can well take care of myself; besides, Mrs. Miller will be with me, also Harry, so that I shall not be dull.

"If I cannot promise to tell you where I am, I will at least let you hear from me now and then. Please, oh, please, do not try and trace me, but do endeavor to think kindly of your loving but unhappy niece, BEATRICE."

"What does it mean, Herbert?" said Horace in sepulchral tones.

"What can it mean?" echoed Herbert.

They sat staring at one another and feeling that such an unlooked-for catastrophe had never before happened since the world began to be peopled by ladies and gentlemen. Their niece, the feminine counterpart of themselves; the embodiment, to their minds, of all that a well-bred, well-born woman should be, to be guilty of such an escapade. It was awful, perfectly awful!

"Yes, very good," said Herbert.

"Besides, who could there be! She is also her own mistress, and if she wished to marry we have no voice in the matter. She is quite capable of having her own way. Witness her leaving all that money here."

Horace had never got over that present of seven per cent. to the bankers.

Herbert, in obedience to his brother's views, dismissed the unfortunate attachment theory and began to look for another. "I wonder," he said sadly, and after a long pause, "I wonder if we have misunderstood Beatrice's character?"

(To be Continued.)

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"Who are you?" asked R. B. B. Boom.

"I am the old Anti-Potash Boom," was the sad reply, as the perspiration rolled down, and it leaned heavily on the B. B. B. Boom for support.

"Don't lean on me," said the B. B. B. Boom.

"I may look strong, but I am quite young—only 14 months old, am growing rapidly, and am mighty weak in the knees. I am doing the work which you have failed to do, although you are 50 years old. You are old, and tough, and rich, and don't require a support. But what chance have you to look so strong?"

"Well, I hardly know," replied the Anti-Potash Boom. "My physicians tell me that my ability to have been over-rated, and that while trying to do up the knees, I have done it all wrong. I have proven my inability. Old age is also creeping on me—having fought near 50 years before any one knew I was living—and now I am unable to perform feats that others are doing. I am collapsed, my friends have turned against me and call me names, and oh, Lord, how sick I become! The very sight of B. B. B. Hold my head while I die."

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The State of Mississippi—No. 1,7125
To W. G. Linn, Alice J. Thompson, Colla Kate Jones and the unknown heirs of Joseph K. Linn deceased, Linn Murray and Isabel Murray James, and Joseph W. Murray, their guardian, Mattie Peables, a minor, and John Peables, her guardian, Neale E. Furber, Laura J. Bentley Lloyd, Ella Bentley Lloyd, Linn Bentley, Benjamin Bentley, and the unknown heirs of E. W. Linn deceased, the defendants.
YOU ARE COMMANDED TO APPEAR BEFORE the Chancery Court of the county of Warren, in and for the State of Mississippi, on the first day of August, 1885, to defend the suit in said court of G. M. Linn, wherein you are defendants.
VICKSBURG, MISS., June 23, 1885.
GEORGE T. HARDY, Clerk.
173-3w

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