MANSFIELD, M. D.

BY H. A. KEAYS.

AFTER thier consultation the two doctors left the house together. They had met over this case many times now, for it was one which baffled them equally.

At the corner, where their ways forked, the younger man would have hurried away, but the old doctor hesitated.

"Mansfield," he began, with evident reluctance, "you are engaged to Dora May?"

There was a peculiar insistence in his voice.

"Why certainly."

"Well, thank God, my good fellow, that you are, for I'll wager every hair on my head and go bald through all eternity if there's another such girl on this dirty earth."

"Oh, naturally, that's what I think," admitted Mansfield. But he spoke as if he hardly heard himself.

"I tell you that woman's a demon," Dr. Moodie continued with explosive irrelevance.

"What woman?"

The two words cut into the end of the old man's sentence like icicles fallen from some dim planet a million leagues away.

"What woman?" There was an inferno of indignation in the repeated question. "There is only one such woman, Mansfield, and you know it as well as I do."

With that the two men melted apart by mutual consent. Along with beards and bifurcation, the ability to say the last word soon enough may perhaps be reckoned an equally distinguishing masculine characteristic.

A few minutes later Dr. Mansfield entered Mrs. May's drawing-room. The girl, waiting for him, sprang up with a little cry.

"No, I shan't kiss you," she fumed with pretty petulance. "I've been waiting—"

He stooped down to her and, lifting her chin with one finger, calmly tilted her pouting lips to his.

"Oh, Apollo, what a superior caress!" she exclaimed, rebelliously, but she subsided against his shoulder with a contented sigh, and began to pull the ends of his moustache with teasing fingers.

"But where have you been to-night?" she asked presently.

"Oh, visiting a patient," he answered, carelessly. "You know, dear, a doctor's—"

"Yes, yes, now don't preach," she interrupted naughtily. "I quite understand that when I'm your wife I must never, never expect or even wish to see you except when nobody else wants to. But you know I'm not your wife yet."

"No."

"Dora, Dora!" he protested.

"Do you know," she said, unexpectedly, "I heard to-day that Mrs. Charters is dying?"

"Did you?"

"Yes. Isn't she?"

Dr. Mansfield sat up straight.

"Dora, you know I never discuss my patients."

"Oh, Leonard, I'm not asking you to discuss her as a doctor. Can't you speak of her as a man?"

"As a man?" he repeated, staring at her. "Oh, as for that—" but instead of finishing his sentence, he got up and began to pace the long drawing-room restlessly. As the girl watched him her tender eyes glistened.

"Leonard, come here," she called out presently with pretty imperiousness. "Sit down at once. You look like an imprisoned tiger, and besides mamma says you are wearing out a regular track in the carpet."

He sat down silently. The girl leaned towards him and stroked his strong hands with timid, fitful fingers. There was a shadow on her lovely face.

"Do you know what I think, Leonard? I think that woman is a perfect fiend."

There was a passion, unfamiliar to him in the still intensity of her voice, and it almost seemed as if the very words must have turned to stare at themselves on her fair young lips.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, drawing his hands away from her as if her fingers were thorns, "that's the second time to-night I have been told that."

"Ah, then other people talk to you about her?"

She nodded her head convictingly.

But his lips were steeled to utterance again, and he let her talk on in unresisting silence.

"Aunt Belle told me such a lot to-day. I can't understand it. It really seem as if that woman has quite enough good in her to know she's bad. Why, if she was only all good, she'd be splendid, Leonard."

"Oh, I don't know, Dora. I'm not sure but what evil's a pretty jolly thing after all. It would be insufferably dull down here if it wasn't for the naughty people."

"Oh, then I suppose you'd like all the women in the world to be like Mrs. Charters?"

"Heaven forbid! I should be sorry to see wickedness lose its charm from lack of contrast, Dora," he said, teasingly.

"Yes, but seriously, Leonard, I always felt as if that woman was a kind of leper. And she knew I did."

"Did she?"

"Oh, yes. I remember the first time she met you—a year ago at the Leslie's ball. She was lovely to you, just to spite me. Do you remember?"

Remember?

Does a man ever forget his first childish grief, his first childish joy, the unfading ecstacy of his heart's earliest dream, the last cold touch of love's dead lips?

Dr. Mansfield said nothing as he stroked his sweetheart's shimmering hair with a dull hand.

"That night I couldn't sleep, darling, thinking of her—and you," the girl went on, sweet and tremulous under his touch. "But after that I never worried, because I saw that you didn't care. Ah, you didn't know how I watched you, sir!"

"Did you, Puss?"

"And this morning when Aunt Belle said that Mrs. Charters had never failed to win any man she had set out to conquer, I didn't say a thing, because I wouldn't even mention her name with yours, Leonard; but oh! you don't know how proud of you I was in my heart. Oh, Leonard, I don't think you begin to know how much I love you."

With an exquisite yielding of herself, she lifted her suddenly wet eyes to his, and the young man gathered her close in his arms, while he murmured those love-worn words of which the ears of women have been covetous since that time so long ago when the first two souls discovered themselves in flesh.

"But I can't understand it, Leonard. Aunt Belle says she's so clever." She waited for him to speak.

"Yes."

"And awfully good-hearted."

"Yes."

"But she isn't what you'd call a beautiful woman?"

"No."

"And children just adore her. I think that's so strange, because, you know, they always say children judge character correctly by instinct."

"Yes."

"But she's not good, Leonard."

"No."

"And she didn't care a snap for her own poor little baby."

"No?"

"She's a cruel woman."

"Undoubtedly."

"Then how can she be kind-hearted, too?"

"I don't know."

"Oh, what an uncommunicative boy!" the girl exclaimed, petulantly. "You're as prickly as a burr to-night. I can't get anywhere near you."

"My dear," he said, elaborately widening his arms, "if this is what you want—"

But she beat him into silence with a sofa cushion. Then she studied him with an elusive frankness which might have charmed him had he only eyes to note it.

"Leonard," she asked suddenly, "do you like Mrs. Charters?"

Far away in the big house a cuckoo clock struck 11 in cadences which rose and fell in mournful unison with the wailing wind.

Dr. Mansfield rose abruptly.

"Dora, you will lose your beauty sleep. I must go, dear."

But she stood in front of him, her little hands clutching the edges of his coat.

"Do you, Leonard?" she repeated.

His clear blue eyes looked steadily into the soft, appealing brown of hers as he answered calmly: "I? Like her?"

He paused a moment, considering. "Why, Puss, I think I hate her," he said, deliberately.

A sob broke from the girl.

"Why, darling, what is it?" he asked in the tenderest alarm.

"Oh, I don't know, Leonard. I'm tired, and you've been—Oh, such a funny, funny boy to-night."

"Dora, I'm going to lose a patient," he said, gravely. "Every physician hates that, and I've fought for this woman's life."

"Yes, I know. I'm sorry. I was naughty," she said, smiling winsomely at him through her tears.

It seemed as if she could hardly let him go. He kissed her good-by so many times that at last he said, with the merest shade of impatience in his voice: "Oh, my dear, I ought really to begin to say good-by to you as soon as I arrive."

She let him go then, and as the big carved door swung stealthily to upon its noiseless sockets behind him, she flew to the tower window in the library, and watched his lessening figure until she could no longer separate it from the swaying shadows, and the last faint echo of his footsteps died upon the encroaching distance.

She did not see him again for several days, so that when she was finally summoned one evening to receive him, there was a piquant frost upon her girlish charm as she entered the drawing room and fluttered close to him like a timid bird. But he drew away from her.

"Leonard!"

The smothered reproach in her voice stirred him.

"Don't, Dora," he said, huskily. "I have come to tell you something. If you look at me like that I can't. And I must. I have tried for days to persuade myself that I needn't tell you—now."

"Oh, I understand it all." Her long-strangled intuitions had sprung full-fledged into birth, as only a woman's can. "You have come to tell me that you cared more for Mrs. Charters than you do for me."

He stared at her in bewilderment.

"And you mean that you don't care?" he said at last.

For an instant she looked at him, with eyes which might have stung his soul, then she said coldly: "Is that all? Because this is not a pleasant interview, and I would just as soon have it over."

"No, it is not all," he exclaimed, passionately. "It isn't the beginning. But I thought you loved me, and now—"

She threw out her hand with a fierce gesture. "How dare you talk to me of love? You! You! What do you know of it? You, who love me to-day, and—and—her to-morrow. Don't speak to me."

But the scorn in her voice goaded him into impetuous speech.

"Dora, listen to me! I will say what I want to. I can't understand myself. If I did I shouldn't be here now. Don't you know the other night I told you I hated Mrs. Charters? So I did. But I hated her because I loved her. Don't you remember telling me you felt sure I didn't care for her after the ball. Yes, I did avoid her, because I knew she was the kind of woman a man was safest away from." He hesitated.

"I have no right to blame her, Dora. But long before she called me in to attend her she had made me understand in a hundred ways—"

He paused again. The girl nodded her head silently. She was leaning back in a chair, her eyes shut, as if she sought blindness from the blow which must fall. The utter forlornness of her slight figure, so still and unresistant in its misery, might have turned the edge of a less relentless fate. But suddenly she sat up, straight and aggressive, with flaming cheeks.

"Leonard, did you ever discuss me with her?"

"On my soul, Dora, never!" he exclaimed impetuously. But in a moment he added, with the appalling self-honesty which characterized him, "That is, if we did, we never said so."

She covered her face with her hands, for the tears would come. The unconscious "we" smote her so cruelly.

"Oh, Leonard, how could you?" she moaned.

"Perhaps if you had known her as I did—" he began again, after a long silence, but Dora chilled him with a proud gesture.

"Leonard," she said presently, "Leonard, I must know, I must. Did you—did you—ever kiss her?"

He could have smiled. In the face of the deep involving of his soul with that dead woman's it seemed so puerile a query.

"No," he answered coldly. "But I would have given my soul to."

"Thank you," she said proudly. "Your frankness is admirable, but somewhat gratuitous." She moved to the door, but he held her as she swept past him.

"Dora, listen! I'm going away. I've offered my services as an army surgeon."

She wavered, and then turned to him helplessly. If she had not loved him better than herself it would have been so easy to be proud.

"Oh Leonard, don't go! You never loved her. You only think so now. Some day you'll know better. You'll know you loved me best."

"Perhaps I shall, but I don't now," he answered, inexorably honest. "The trouble is, Dora, I've been loving two women. Some one has said that at heart all men are bigamists. It must be true, or I can't explain myself."

She winced under his words, but an intuition born of her love sustained her even now.

"You're too honest, Leonard. You ask yourself too many questions. I should think that a doctor would have known better than to pore over symptoms, like a student, until he thought he had the disease. I suppose we've got the germ of everything in our bodies and our souls if we chose to look for it."

"Oh, Dora, you don't understand—"

"Don't I? Do you suppose I didn't know?" she demanded, with sudden upheaving passion. "Why, Leonard from the very night of the ball I followed it all, step by step."

He stared at her stupidly.

"Yes, and you pry and pry, and then you're so honest that you're brutal. Why, you're so honest that I believe you'd almost tell a lie in making sure that you told the truth."

He listened to her in amazement. He had never suspected this simple child of subtlety. He had thought her as plain to him as a page of primer prose.

All at once she turned to him with a little cry.

"Oh, Leonard, don't you care anything for me? And I'm so good. I've never done a thing in my life that I would be ashamed to have you know." Her cheeks flamed. "Could Mrs Charters have said that?"

"No."

"Why, they say I'm the sweetest girl in this town." She smiled at him wanly.

"And I'm—well, oh you know, Leonard—" Was she going to speak of her wealth, for whose sake so many men had craved her "sweetness?"—"Why, Leonard, you know I'm not ugly, and oh! I love you so terribly!" Her voice died into a whisper, so faint that he barely caught it.

"Ugly, Dora, you're as beautiful as an angel!" he exclaimed in deep, strong tones. The bitter pathos of it all, this simple mustering of all her girlish virtues to tempt him back to her side, melted his heart to her like wax in a furnace.

But she hid her face from him, and began to sob. Her humiliation was greater than she could bear.

"Go away!" she whispered passionately: "Good-bye."

"No, no, Dora," he protested. "Don't you know I may never see you again? I can't leave you like this."

She sat up instantly.

"Do you want to kiss me?" she asked, with a naivete at which he could hardly hide a smile.

She was such a child—when she was not a woman. A week ago he had had her all analyzed and labeled, and she had required very few tags, for there was nothing complex about her. But now it struck him with the force of discovery that no human being is simple, except, perhaps, the one who deems him such.

The next day he went away, out upon the field of bravery, a wiser and a better man, with all his nature enlarged and sweetened by the vision he had had of the love which holds the hearts of men true to all that is most noble in themselves.—Canadian Magazine.

COFFEE AND CAKES.

Coffee and cakes.
(And the bright eyes of Helen)

What joys are in store for us—Time has the tellin'!
Coffee and cakes, and the bright eyes of Helen!
The rustle of silvery curtains of lace—
The light of her eyes and the light of her face
Where the bright dimples race!
A blessing that day from Love's heart was upwellin'—
Coffee and cakes, and the bright eyes of Helen!

Who'd think that a beggar who knelt in the dust
And the darkness of life, and thanked God for a crust,
Would e'er o'er a banquet be granted the grace
Of the light of those eyes and the joy of that face,
Where such rose-dimples race!
Ah, what is in store for us—Time has the tellin'—
Coffee and cakes, and the bright eyes of Helen!

Was ever such banquet? Ah, every bright minute
Had silvery rippies of laughter wove in it!
All the joy of a lifetime seemed merged in an hour
Of light and of joy, in an April-sweet shower,
And that face like a flower!
Forever and ever Love's blessings upwellin'
For coffee and cakes, and the bright eyes of Helen!

—Frank L. Stanton, in Atlanta Constitution.

Jobson Reads History

"I PROPOSE," said Mr. Jobson, when he arrived home with a bulky package under his arm the other evening—"I propose to make the present year one of instruction and mental cultivation in this household," and he cut the twine that bound the bundle, ripped off the paper and revealed a stack of books of the same color and pattern.

"This thing," he went on, "of doddering around the house for five or six hours every night, until bedtime, playing checkers, or sawing on the violin, or listening to you pick out a note here and a note there on the piano, and watching you reading with rapt, open-mouthed attention the narration of the extraordinary adventures of 'Birdie Juteworks,' or, 'The Hapless Maiden of the Mill,' has got to come to an end. It's slothful, unprofitable, idiotic, and a miserable fashion of frittering away the time."

Here Mr. Jobson halted and gazed solemnly at Mrs. Jobson, who wondered what was coming next.

"I have here, Mrs. Jobson," he went on, "an immortal historical work, which you may have heard of, and which you may not have heard of. It is called 'The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,' and it was written by Gibbon."

"Quite true," said Mrs. Jobson, sweetly. "I read an abridgement of it when I was at school, and I have read the complete work through twice since we were married. You will remember that my Uncle John gave it to me for a birthday present, in eight volumes. It is in the bookcase now, bound in morocco, you'll remember."

Mr. Jobson's countenance fell, but he promptly recovered and looked incredulous.

"There's something queer about all this, that's all I've got to say," he remarked, however. "I never knew of these books being in the house, and you must have been hiding them all these years. I'll bet you the nicest poke bonnet that can be built for new currency that those volumes have never seen the inside of the bookcase, anyhow—you've probably had them in the bottom of one of the old trunks in the storeroom all this time."

"They've been in the bookcase ever since I got them," put in Mrs. Jobson, and Mr. Jobson, perceiving that he was cornered, cleared his throat ponderously and went on:

"We'll just let that little mystery pass for the present," he said. "If I had known that there was an edition of this immortal work around my house d'ye suppose that I'd have blown in $28 for this 12-volume edition? However, we'll let that pass, as I say. The fact remains that a chapter of this great historical work is going to be read in this household every night from now on, and I'm going to be the reader. We need to have our horizon expanded. We live too much in the trifling and frivolous present. We are too much concerned with merely dinky affairs. We need inspiration, elevation, exaltation. What better way of gaining those things than by harking back, through the medium of this masterful work, to the glorious days and the mighty happenings of imperial Rome?" and Mr. Jobson was becoming so eloquent that Mrs. Jobson felt like chiming in with "Hear! Hear!" but she didn't care to take the chance.

"I think," went on Mr. Jobson, "that I started to read this book when I was a young fellow, but I'm not sure, and

HE COULDN'T FIND THE HOTSTUFF.

I'm not setting up any fictitious claims like some people I know. We'll begin on these readings right after dinner, and from this time on nothing whatever is going to interfere with at least one chapter of Gibbon every evening. You'll thank me for this later on although I can see by your looks now that you are suffering the miseries of an anticipated martyrdom."

Mrs. Jobson Cooled the impeachment, and said:

"Of course, you know that the chapters of Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall' are very long, and that—"

"Oh, that'll be all right, too," interrupted Mr. Jobson. "I don't care if each chapter's as long as the Koran, when I set myself a certain task, that task I perform in the face of every discouragement. Just hurry the girl up with dinner, so's we can get at the first volume right after dinner."

So, immediately after the evening meal, Mr. Jobson planted Mrs. Jobson in a chair right opposite himself, so that he could watch and see if she yawned or nodded, and started in to drone chapter 1 of volume 1 of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall." He hadn't got through with more than half a page before he struck a number of snags. By the time he had read four pages he was in real difficulties. The Latin quotations in the foot notes first got him going. He bravely went at them and spluttered them so that they sounded like a mixture of ragtime and Fiji, and he looked out the tail of his eye to see whether Mrs. Jobson was laughing at him. She wasn't laughing outwardly, however, no matter how much she might have been inwardly enjoying herself. The names of the ancient provinces of the Roman empire caused Mr. Jobson to splutter and choke a good deal, too, but he attacked them all, and continued to regard Mrs. Jobson slantwise, after mispaming a long list of the provinces, to see if she was giving any exterior manifestations of glee, which would have afforded him his opportunity to throw the book down and refuse to play any more. Mrs. Jobson, however, preserved her interested exterior.

"I wonder," Mr. Jobson broke out after reading many pages, "where the dickens the hot stuff, so to speak, to this work begins? Where's the account of this fellow, Nero, who used to light Christian maidens for torches and who played on the fiddle while Rome was burning, and—"

"Well," interrupted Mrs. Jobson, "you will remember that the work doesn't include the reign of Nero. The history begins, I believe, with the reign of Augustus, and then hurriedly passes on to the reign of Trajan, where the real story begins."

"Well, that'll be about all for the present," said Mr. Jobson, closing the book with a snap. "You seem to know the whole thing, anyhow, to hear you tell it. However, I shall resume the readings to-morrow evening right after dinner."

Mr. Jobson did resume the readings on the following evening and continued them for four nights, until his voice grew husky. He really did appear to be enjoying himself very much.

Immediately after dinner on Thursday evening he went upstairs, and when he came down, about half an hour later, he was togged out in his best clothes and primped up.

"Are you going out?" inquired Mrs. Jobson.

"Do I look like I'm on my way down to the cellar to repair the furnace?" he asked her.

"But," said Mrs. Jobson, "how about the reading from—"

"The readings are all off," broke in Mr. Jobson. "If you think you're going to put up a job like that and make it stick—bamboozling me into reading about a million pages every night of long-winded, dry-as-dust, dead stuff about dead criminals with purple togas, for the purpose of keeping me in the house all the time, you're mixed, that's all. I'm going downtown to play billiards and take in a variety show, and if you want to wade through that Roman rot, go ahead. There's nobody going to stop you."

And when he had gone Mrs. Jobson smiled and smiled.—Washington Star.

ROYALTY'S GREATNESS.

London Ragamuffins Treated to Christmas Dinners by the Duke and Duchess of York.

There are not two warmer hearts in England than those of the duke and duchess of York. Every Christmas some hundreds of poor, hungry little wretches have at least one hearty meal provided for them entirely by their royal highnesses. Last year the poor children in a certain parish in the east of London were thus regaled, and, to add to their enjoyment, the duke and duchess went themselves and said a few cheery, heartfelt words to each of the little ones.

Going up to one urchin, who was looking very solemn and somewhat sad, the duke said to him:

"Now, my little man, why such a dismal face? Let me see if I can't do something to make you happier. Would you like some more pudding, eh?"

"Yes," stolidly, but very politely, said the urchin.

"Yes, what? What ought you to say, my little fellow? You—"

"Yes, if I can get it!" replied the youth, without moving a muscle of his face.

His royal highness later went up to a seven-year-old boy who appeared to be in more than ordinary pain, judging from his sorrowful, troubled face.

"You are not happy, little man, are you?" said the duke, most kindly.

"No, sir," said the youth, crying.

"Oh, this will never do," replied the duke, encouragingly. "Why are you not happy?"

The little boy put his hand across his trousers and said: "I'm too tight here to be happy, sir!"

BLANKETING ORANGE GROVES.

How the Young Trees Are Protected from the Frost in the South.

Who ever heard of an orange tree being rolled up in a blanket at night? They never heard of such a thing in Florida until the year of the blizzard when the temperature dropped from 55 above zero to 20 in one night and thousands of orchards full of fruit were turned black and bare. Now orange growers have blankets for their trees and when there is danger of a frost tents are stretched around them, and very likely big kerosene lamps or small stoves are lit inside the tent to keep the fingers and toes of valuable trees from being nipped. Only 30 seconds are needed to put up some of these tents which are already in place attached to poles beside the trees and operated by means of rings and strings. In an hour a whole orchard can be made to look like an army camping ground. Some young orchards of many acres are inclosed in slat houses which can be opened and closed like window shutters. Still another way is to inclose the orchard in board fences as high as the trees. On frosty nights a roof is formed by strips of muslin stretched on wires from one side of the field to the other. In all of these inclosures artificial heat of some kind is kept up and everything is used from hand lamps to big sheet iron "salamanders" and miles of stovepipe to distribute the heat to all parts of the orchards.