

A Letter and a Face.

BY ROSE HAWTHORN LATHROP.

CHAPTER II.

From Harper's Bazar.

At dinner appeared, besides Sidney Romer and his step daughter, two ladies—the latter's governesses—and a young German, her music-master. The governesses were most refined and fashionable—persons of real cultivation, who were paid enormously for isolating themselves at the ranch. The tutor of music was full of talent and suppressed adoration of his pupil. The symphonic Herr Greissen knew, however, that he would lose a large salary if he talked of love, or even rolled his eyes toward the young girl, and he was thoroughly silenced. Michaelis measured the three persons who contributed to Lucy's development at a glance, and mentally conceded that old Romer had some good new notions about bringing up a lonely maiden. The latter took occasion to reiterate that he was going abroad that very winter. As he expressed it, Lucy was now loaded, and would go off with well-aimed effect in Europe. He declared that she had hitherto been treated as the surgeons treat their patients when telling them they are in no danger, but subsequently admit that the operation so successfully performed might have killed them. He had just begun to reveal to Lucy that she had been cultivated within an inch of her life. If fine clothes and a coronet could reward her for her patience in the last ten years, she should have them to play with as a relaxation.

Lucy was talking, meantime, with her companions, and only once seemed to overhear her stepfather and then she gazed at him in wonder.

Michaelis glanced at her—when was he not doing so?—and felt as if he were in a whirlpool of contradictions. He pictured her "going off" as a princess, with all the realism of fact, and yet he felt she was to be his wife, doomed to only twenty thousand a year, and no title.

She looked back at him with large eyes. She had met no young men of marked worth, the visitors at the ranch usually being young women. Michaelis was a fine example of the other sex. His face and figure were handsome, with the grand aspect of stalwart youth and splendid vitality; and he was free from overweight of individuality, such, for instance, as the young German latened under, with his musical frenzies. Her cousin was the sort of man against whom nothing can be said, and who makes one feel that nature has a perpetual fashion of marvellous excellence, although she sometimes tries experiments.

Nobody prevented Michaelis and Lucy from going through the state apartments of Ranch House, the fitting crown of Ranch Superior, as it was called. The charming girl showed her visitor the curiosities of the library, the paintings and porcelains of the parlors, the attractions of the billiard room, the piano in the white and gold music-room. All this was without the alloy of Mr. Romer or the governesses. Besides, she had a long talk with him as she sat unheeding on the end of a sofa in a dusky corner of the parlor, while Michael-

is occupied a hassock in front of her, and looking her steady in the face for a blissful half hour. She was so pleased at a comparative stranger's caring to here anything she would consent to tell about her occupations and the life on the ranch that she revealed everything, and it made a story of no little attractiveness in itself. She had just told her cousin of some of her friendships, which were with certain noted and gifted women who had been entertained at the ranch through the determined efforts of Mr. Romer.

"If I can only manage," said she, sighing, "to become a little like them, and give others as much happiness as they have given me! Do you think—you have seen so much of people—do you think I can be quite cultivated and gentle and good to know, if I cannot write poetry?"

An expression filled Michaelis's face on the instant which suddenly informed Lucy that he thought her delicious. She became confused in the prettiest way, and was absently enigmatical until she said good night, and ran off.

When Lucy was by herself she plunged into a bright crowd of meditations upon life. Life had always been for her full of comfort and nice amusements. But she now saw that a young man's gaze was able to make life bewilderingly sweet, and as magical as magic itself. Her heart sang, her soul laughed, her eyes spoke, as she stood before her mirror—that immediate refuge of gushing affection. For the girl of seventeen is changing so quickly that she is not a stranger to herself, and yet the only friend she wholly trusts, and so she meets her own eyes with eloquent appeals and delighted assurances.

The next morning Lucy awoke in amazement. There was something to look forward to which was even better than birthday presents, new books, a long horseback ride in fine weather, or the arrival of distinguished guests from England, who had indeed been known to confer the benefit of their august presence upon Ranch House. She did not know why she thought it so especially desirable to have a young companion of her cousin Michaelis's grace suddenly dropped into her life; but she wisely concluded that Hamlet's phrase, "There are more things," etc., would apply in this particular case, to which her philosophy was not equal, and she did not attempt to "ream" about it. Of course there was one of the family, and she was ready to treat him affectionately; and she had always thought it would have been more pleasant to have a brother, who could praise one, to take care of one in case of burglars and fire. Lucy felt as if no one had really praised her before she had received that wonderful glance from Michaelis, which burned up like a flame in his steady gaze. What makes one prouder than praise from a person we are quietly admiring? And what is so agreeable as praise which is thus upon us in all our modesty?

Lucy looked radiant, as she came down stairs in her pale-tinted dress, stepping as if she could have flown like a girl Mercury.

Michaelis was standing about in the great entrance hall, although it was very early; and he even seemed impatiently expectant, looking

up at the stairs before the girl appeared, and walking back and forth with quick little motions of eagerness. When Lucy finally emerged from vacancy and approached, he held out both hands to her.

She laid hers in his in the most matter of fact way. "Cousin Dan, it seems to me I have known you this long time," she announced, as if he had hitherto been a familiar bit of furniture about the house, and was only just turned into his true share as a young man. It would be a sad thing if this portion of her home should suddenly walk off forever on its new found legs.

"We have been so long connected in the thoughts of others that I'm sure we never could have been strangers," he began, in an explanatory way, and nastily, as if there were no time to spare.

"Why, how do you mean?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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