

# ONLY A FARMER'S DAUGHTER.

By  
MRS. FORRESTER.

## CHAPTER XX.

Mrs. Clayton was a rich woman, although she did not, of course, possess more than a tithe of her husband's income. Still, that was enough to give her every luxury that she had been accustomed to, and to keep her in a manner befitting her station. She could not pretend any desire for the loss of a man who had been so cruel, neglectful and almost brutal to her; but the time she had been absent from him had in a measure softened the harshness of the previous memories, and the sad fate which had overtaken him forbade in her forgiving heart the angry remembrance of past wrongs.

"Perhaps, aunt," she said, in a low, regretful voice, "if I had been more forbearing and less provoking to him he might have been different all the time."

Lady Marlow looked up from her book. "It is always right, dear, to think kindly of people who wronged you, and I should feel it wrong to speak against Francis Clayton now; but I cannot help thinking that no amount of goodness or gentleness could have touched a heart so bitter and cynical as his."

Mrs. Maxwell declined absolutely to be present at Winifred's wedding. As she was utterly indifferent now to the favor or disfavor of her relations, she did not trouble to make any excuse, but contented herself with saying she did not feel inclined to be one of the party.

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The wedding was none the less happy or magnificent for Mrs. Maxwell's absence; everyone pronounced it a very splendid affair; and this time the sympathies of all were enlisted for the bride and bridegroom were both young and handsome and happy. Sir Howard gave Winifred away, and her husband received her with infinite gladness and tenderness. All the farmers and villagers came round to see Miss Eyre, "that they had known from a child," married.

At Hazel Court there were great festivities; dinners for all the tenants, and games and fireworks in the evening, and a military band was engaged to play.

Captain Le Marchant was best man, of course; Ada Fordyce chief bridesmaid, and Lord Harold Eskrine was able to be present without suffering any pangs of jealousy. He was to be married himself in a month's time. Madame de Montellen had actually been persuaded to be present at the wedding.

"When we come back you will always live with us, dear madame," Winifred had said.

"Not yet, my love," the old lady answered. "Young people are best by themselves at first. I shall be very angry with you if you come back here now, in six months or a year's time you care to have me, I shall rejoice to come to you."

The spring had come round again, and Mr. and Mrs. Hastings were at Hazel Court. Mrs. Hastings was laying with them. She was as usual now not so bright and sparkling, perhaps, as in the old days, but very sweet and good.

She and Winifred were sitting together in the green morning room as the twilight was coming on.

"I think the old Court is decidedly improved by the presence of a mistress," said Mrs. Clayton presently. "I always thought it charming—now it is perfect."

Winifred laughed a short, happy laugh. "Oh, do you really think so? It seems to me the place ought to have a much grander mistress than I. Fancy a girl brought up to a simple life now coming to such state and grandeur! I feel as if I ought to be like Lady Burchell, and instead of making myself so thoroughly at home to pine away and die."

"It is a good thing Errol is not here to hear you, or he would be very angry at your saying such foolish things. I never ever anyone was born with a thorough appreciation of the pomps and vanities of the world, it is you, I think. It makes me laugh when I remember how you used to preach to me about love in a cottage, and marrying the man you loved if he had not a shilling."

"Not if you send the letter over to Holton, Errol."

"What is it so important as all that?" "Yes, darling," she answered coaxingly, pushing him into a chair, and bringing the writing materials to him.

"Very well, little tyrant. But where is he? I can't tell you," cried Winifred, looking blank. "Do you not know?" "I don't, indeed. I believe his regiment has left Hounslow."

"Well, cannot you send it to his club?" "Yes, I can do that; but you seemed in such a terrible hurry, and if he is not in town, the chances are he may not get it for days. Perhaps Fee knows."

"Now, Errol, how should she?" "I don't know, darling. I always thought they were such great friends."

"Why, they have not met for months and months."

"Perhaps they might not like to meet, then," said Mr. Hastings, looking up at Winifred, and smiling a little maliciously.

"Had you not better consult Fee first?" and then Winifred fairly laughed, but would not be induced to say anything more on the subject. However, the letter was duly written and sent, and in three days' time the answer arrived. Col. d'Aguiar would have much pleasure in spending a few days at the Court, and Mr. Hastings might expect him the following day.

CHAPTER XXI.

When the Colonel came there was an embarrassment in his manner towards Mrs. Clayton; he was grave, kind and courteous, as though there had been no more than an ordinary friendship between them. He was resolved not to say a single word of love to her. He felt his wealth to be a barrier between them, and could not bear to say what was in his heart for her, for fear any doubt of his great love should come between them—for fear any base thought should creep in and see a sordid desire in the renewal of his passion for her.

The last few months had been very painful to him. When he heard of Francis Clayton's sudden death, a feeling that he was ashamed of came over him. He was not glad, not actually glad—nay, he felt a kind of pity for the man who had been out of the prime of his life, self-assertive and proud as he had been; but he could not forget that Fee was free. He felt that she must be the first to hold communication with him. Would she do so? Did she still care for him, and had she believed truly in the uselessness of his renunciation of her?

Mrs. Hastings was by no means satisfied with the progress of the affair. Instead of the first natural reserve between Col. d'Aguiar and her friend being dissipated it seemed to grow stronger each day. They avoided, above all things, being left alone together. Winifred wanted to help them; she felt certain they cared for each other, and besides, women in the first flush of a happy marriage are always inveterate match makers.

"Errol," said his wife one day at lunch, "I want to drive you over to the Manor this afternoon. I am going to see grandpa, and he has grown so fond of you that I shall expect you to visit him."

"You forget, dear," replied Mr. Hastings, "we cannot be so unaccountable as to leave our guests."

"How stupid and provoking men are!" Winifred thought, pettishly. She looked up at Col. d'Aguiar pleadingly. "I was intending to ask permission to ride over and call on Lord Lancing this afternoon," he answered, fabricating a polite fiction for the occasion.

"And I have a headache and do not care to go out," said Mrs. Clayton. "But we will go over to the Manor as you wish, Winifred. Have you ordered the ponies?" "No, please ring the bell, and say 3 o'clock."

"I am just going round to the stables. Will you come, d'Aguiar? What will you ride this afternoon?" and the two gentlemen went off together.

"Fee," said Winifred, suddenly, "you and Col. d'Aguiar are very provoking."

"How, Winifred?" "You are so strange and distant to each other. Why do you not let him see you care for him?"

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"How can you be so blind, Fee? You must know what he feels. Is it not quite natural that he should hesitate to remind you of the past now that you are rich?"

"But, Winifred, a woman cannot speak first."

"Of course you cannot ask him to marry you, but you can let him see that you are not utterly indifferent to him."

Mrs. Clayton made no answer. "It is so tiresome of him to go out," continued Winifred, presently.

"And defect your intentions, little match maker," added Fee, looking up. When Errol and his wife had started Mrs. Clayton took her book to the green-room and began to read. Col. d'Aguiar came to fetch a letter he had written in the morning. A sudden thought crossed Fee's mind that sent the blood rushing over her neck and brow and made her heart beat in great throbs.

"Col. d'Aguiar," she said, with a voice almost inarticulate with nervousness. "Yes, Mrs. Clayton."

"Are you really going with me?" "I am just starting for Holton."

"Won't you stay with me? I shall be so dull all alone."

"If you really wish it, I will."

"Of course I wish it or I should not ask. Fee responded, a little petulantly. "Then I will go and send the groom back to the stables." And he left the room.

Mrs. Clayton was excessively uneasy in her mind. She could not form the least resolve what she should say to him when he returned.

"You will not thank me for spoiling your ride," were her first words to him. "I would much rather be here. I only proposed riding to Holton because I thought Mrs. Hastings was anxious for her husband's company."

"What do you think of the theory that food has a potent influence in determining character?" asked Mr. Smithfield, as he put three lumps of sugar in his coffee.

"I guess it's all right," replied Mr. Wood, as he severed a portion of his beefsteak. "It always seems a little cannibalistic to me when you order lobster."

"Well," retorted Mr. Smithfield, good humoredly, "I ought to have known it was dangerous to lead you money after I discovered your fondness for beefs. But, seriously, if there were anything in the theory, wouldn't it make a man sheepish to eat mutton?"

"It would, and prize fighters ought to restrict themselves to a diet of scraps,"—Pittsburg Gazette.

Has a Thick Hide.

The hide of the hippopotamus in some parts is fully two inches thick.

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She Can't Do It.

Mamma—Johnny, I shall have to tell your father what a naughty boy you have been.

Johnny—I guess dad's right when he says a woman can't keep a thing to herself.—Boston Transcript.

Must Be Eaten.

A gentleman who was visiting some friends in New York noticed that the little girl in the family was eating some new sort of cereal preparation.

"What sort of a 'key' are you, anyway? a monkey, a donkey or a Yankee?"

"Don't you like that, my dear?" inquired the friend.

"Not particularly," replied the little maid.

"Why do you eat it, then?" persisted the inquirer.

"It's a good thing Errol is not here to hear you, or he would be very angry at your saying such foolish things. I never ever anyone was born with a thorough appreciation of the pomps and vanities of the world, it is you, I think. It makes me laugh when I remember how you used to preach to me about love in a cottage, and marrying the man you loved if he had not a shilling."

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