

A WOMAN'S INFLUENCE



LULU JAMISON

CHAPTER XX.

BRIAN'S PRESCRIPTION.

"I believe I am thoroughly tired out, Margaret. I have had a very hard day's work."

Margaret turned from her book as Brian entered the room with these words.

"Have you?" she asked. "How nice you will find your well-earned rest, your chair is waiting for you."

"It shall not be empty a minute longer. It is wonderfully comfortable. Sit there, won't you? I like to see your face; it rests me."

"I like to consider myself useful, as well as ornamental," she laughed, wondering why the rebellious color should fly to her face in such a disagreeable way.

"When did you get my message, Margaret?" he asked.

"About 4 o'clock, I think. I was sorry you could not come home to dinner. You have had some, of course?"

"I had an apology for one," he returned. "I hadn't time for any other; so many important cases brought in to-day. This hospital practice is worth a great deal to me, I tell you. I was getting rusty, and it has polished me up considerably. I suppose Miss Hilton left, as she intended?"

"She went early this afternoon."

This answer was given with a faltering voice.

"Dear Margaret," he said with feeling, "I know how you will miss her. I wish you would let me comfort you. Don't go away."

"On for a few minutes," she answered hastily. "I am coming back."

True to her promise she returned quickly, with a small tray in her hand.

"Only some cake and coffee," she said, "to make up for that apology for a dinner. I made the coffee. Do you think you will like it?"

"Will it? Its fragrance is sufficiently tempting," Brian jumped from his chair, and took the tray from Margaret's hands. "I'm just beginning to realize that I am hungry. You will help me to drink,"

"Of course," laughed Margaret. "I want to show my appreciation of culinary ability. Norah thinks I will be quite a finished cook in time. This is nice, and if we had some Elmwood cream it would be all to be desired. You like it? I am glad. I want you to tell me now the cause of your serious face. It looked ever so long when I came in."

"I am the least bit anxious about you. I fear you are losing the old strength you used to boast of. Don't shake your head so decidedly. I see with an experienced eye, I saw how that ring slipped about when you were pouring this coffee, and seven months ago, when I put it there, Margaret, it was very tight and snug. I want to see it so again. You need the country breezes. I know that Elmwood is the magical medicine which your case demands, and if I prescribe it, I don't believe you will find it bitter to take."

"And it is?" she asked, after a moment's silence.

"That is to be just as you say, Margaret."

"Then," she returned with a radiant face, "we will both go home."

When Wilson learned of this decision, "The fascinations of New York have been exercised in vain," he declared. "I think you will find something to regret when you have gone from us. Still I am sure you will realize a much needed benefit, and in view of that I must be glad that you will so soon enjoy the pleasure of the country. I hope you will not quite forget us."

"I will never forget you," was the impulsive answer. "The service you have rendered Brian. I cannot even realize with what thankfulness. For the sake of you, I can do is to give you a place among the friends I cherish most highly. Brian and I will hope to see you quite often. I know you will like Elmwood. It is so beautiful. I never knew how much I longed to see it until this moment. I believe I haven't dared to think. The other day I took a long ride on the Madison avenue cars, just for something to do, and when we got out in the nineties there was a real little bit of country before us. I could not stay the car. The sun really seemed so much brighter; and when I heard the hens and saw the ducks and geese walking along the narrow pavements I wanted to sit down and weep."

Wilson smiled. "Did you think better of the impulse?" he questioned.

"Oh yes. Fortunately, I came upon a woman sitting on the grass with the whitest, fattest baby I almost ever saw. I adore babies, and I began to realize that one extravagantly. The mother was delighted, and by way of recompense, I presume, gave me a detailed history of the seven fatter and whiter ones which had preceded this one. By the time she finished I had forgotten that I ever wanted to cry."

"So the baby proved an effective antidote. You were very fortunate in your meeting. Now, I believe I must hurry away to run in to say 'good-bye'."

"I don't believe you have stayed that moment," complained Margaret, "and I am sure if you were very anxious you could stretch it just the least bit. Brian will be so sorry not to have seen you. Are you so very busy, Doctor?"

"Well, rather," was the half-hesitating reply. "Summer is near at hand, and that is a time of wretchedness for the unfortunate poor. I wish we had a larger corps of free doctors. We certainly need them in those crowded, miserable districts where the white crapes and tiny hearse tell their own story of suffering and death. I have brought a shawl to your face; I will say no more."

"You are merely giving me a glimpse of the other side of life," she said thoughtfully. "I find the contrast, as usual, sad and strong. I wish the world was different. I wish we lived under Bellamy's order of things."

Wilson smiled. "I fear such order is too Utopian ever to be realized," he answered.

"Perhaps, though I dare say—Are you really going? Well, then I must say good-bye. I hope it is not necessary for me to repeat the assurance that Elmwood always holds a welcome for you, and thank you for your good wishes and I wish you to remember that I appreciate the—happiness you have helped to give me."

"No more," said Wilson, with painful abruptness. "My service is not worth much mention."

Without another word he pressed her hand and was gone, leaving her rather surprised at his unusual manner.

CHAPTER XXI.

ELMWOOD AGAIN.

Margaret had finished her breakfast, and even after Brian had left she still sat over the table, her heart filled with sweet content, and her eyes dim with the happy tears that shut from her vision the familiar objects about her.

For she was home. Home in dear old Elmwood.

And now, after eating what she declared to Brian to be her biggest breakfast in three months she wanted to sit still and rest her eyes upon the smooth green lawn where the bright sun sifted through the luxuriant network of green branches, and the lilac and the hawthorn were bursting into a breath of fragrant flowers, and say to herself it is good to be here.

She repeated the same words to Brian when he came in at luncheon, and he, looking at her face, almost marvelled at the change that had come over it.

"I dare say, you are right, Margaret; it is good for you to be here. I don't believe I exaggerate when I declare that there is already some color in your cheeks. What have you been doing with yourself this morning?"

"I don't believe I can begin to tell you. First there was so much to talk about with Mrs. Davis. We have been laying out the garden, and involving many delightful plants. You will see the results after awhile; and then, this afternoon I must go to The Cedars."

"And he, no doubt, is pining for a sight of you. I suppose that will complete your happiness."

"As nearly as it can be completed. You remember how we left Elmwood, Brian, under the chill and cold of winter, and we return to it in the joy of a great resurrection? I accept it as an omen, and I am—very happy."

She left the table with these words and walked to the open window. Brian followed her.

"Let me share your happiness," he said, in a low voice. "Darling, the probation has been very long."

He slipped his hand about her waist, and drew her to the veranda outside.

"You remember our compact? I shall keep the secret of that until the day comes when you shall bid for a break in it and will come. Margaret, as certainly as we both stand here, you will find me very patient until I have won my victory, for I feel that even the price which Jacob paid for Rachel is not too dear to pay for you. Now, may I tell you what I have been doing to-day?"

"Yes; I shall like very much to hear."

"Well, I have been taking with Dr. Phillips. I wish you would let me see your face, Margaret. It will be more encouraging than your back. There, that is better; thank you. I saw Dr. Phillips, as I said, and I told him of my wish to build up a practice here. Just as I expected, he feels his advancing years, and is very glad of a young assistant. He is doing his best to help the son of his partner he tells me. So you see I am particularly fortunate. I can step right into his shoes, and though I may find them very large."

"You will grow," put in Margaret, glad of this new turn to the conversation. "And I am very much pleased," she added, more gravely.

"So am I. It is the first step toward winning my wife."

A half hour later Margaret was sitting in the chair of honor in Alice's room, half-laughing, half-crying, and trying to ask and answer questions in the same breath.

"I'm going to keep you a few minutes all to myself," declared Alice, "because I have so much to tell you, Margaret. So much I could only hint at it in my letter. I could not express one-half of the happiness I longed for you to share."

"I am so glad, dear," Margaret answered. "So very glad indeed for Bertie. Tell me all about it now."

"And it is?" she asked, after a moment's silence.

"That is to be just as you say, Margaret."

When Wilson learned of this decision, "The fascinations of New York have been exercised in vain," he declared. "I think you will find something to regret when you have gone from us. Still I am sure you will realize a much needed benefit, and in view of that I must be glad that you will so soon enjoy the pleasure of the country. I hope you will not quite forget us."

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and he had expressed his pleasure in Brian's changed conduct. "You know I had something to say to you."

"Your eyes tell all your secrets, Margaret. What is that something?"

"Can you not guess? It affects Brian and you. You have always been good friends until very lately, and I am anxious to know your feelings to be rendered. The circumstances of your last meeting were not—very pleasant. He will remember this, and perhaps you will remember it too. I am going to ask you to forget it. When I recall all that you have done for me before, I feel perfectly confident that you will not refuse this favor. You understand me, I am sure?"

"Understand! Who can fail to understand such goodness as yours? When I think of that, it is all the harder to forget the suffering he has caused you. Perhaps I cannot promise, Margaret."

"Oh yes, you can. The suffering you speak of may have been of great advantage. I may become the better and the stronger for it. Besides, Brian has struggled and suffered much. Even I can never know how much. And he is trying now. For that he deserves credit. I think you will have to do as I wish, Bertie. Indeed, I am sure you will."

"There, I have nothing more to say. You always have your way. I dare say we don't realize what Brian had to overcome before he won his victory, and as far as my words or actions are concerned, he shall have no reminders of the past."

"Thank you," was the grateful answer. "I never liked you better or admired you more than I do now."

He smiled his response as they turned in at the gates of Elmwood. As they approached the door Margaret saw Brian waiting to meet her.

He had evidently not expected to see Bertie, and Margaret noticed a slight encroachment upon his face.

"I have Bertie with me," she said, riding close to him. "He has come all the way from The Cedars to see you."

"Little hypocrite," murmured Bertie under his breath. "Don't you think it is wrong to tell lies?"

The next second he had assisted her from her horse and turned to Brian. The road passed between them but their hand-clap held a language and a meaning of its own.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

CANDLES FROM PLANTS.

Vegetables Which Bear Wax and Tallow

—Facts About Camphor.

Several very curious substances of an inflammable nature are produced by plants, said a naturalist to a Washington Star writer. Many vegetable species bear wax, which in the form of minute scales on the surface of the plum and other stone fruit makes what is called the "bloom." It exists so abundantly in the fruit of a Virginia myrtle that the latter has received the name of "candle berry." These berries are collected in great quantities for their wax and candles made from them burn with remarkable brightness and freedom from smoke, at the same time giving out a pleasant fragrance. A wax-bearing tree exists in South Africa, the berries of which yield a substance which is made into candles by the Dutch. There are several species of wax palms in South America. One of them has its leaves covered with scales of wax, while the trunk of the other kind is covered with the wax as with a varnish.

A substance very like tallow is yielded by a tree in China, the seeds of which are hard, brownish black. Each of them contains three round white kernels, about the size and shape of hazelnuts. These kernels have small stones inside them, around which the fatty matter lies. From the pit of the stone an oil for burning in lamps is pressed. Almost all the candles used in the south of China are made from this vegetable tallow.

A tree abounds on the Malabar coast of India called the "piney" which bears a pulpy solid that yields a great quantity of solid tallow approaching wax in firmness and superior to animal fat for the manufacture of candles.

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"Brian! Let Brian go to the devil! I beg you pardon, my dear. I see I have horrified you. I am not over-pleased with Brian, as you may guess. I dare say you find excuses for the scamp, however. I am glad he has some grace left. You women can usually manage men. I was getting ready to come and shoot him, but I must acknowledge that your method has been more effectual."

"He is growing tired of doing nothing," she answered, without meeting the Colonel's glance, "and he has decided to practice his profession here. I dare say he will become a highly respectable Fiddlesticks! There it is again, Margaret. The outcome of prejudice, most probably. I beg your pardon a second time, and predict that Brian will become all that you want to make him. If he doesn't tell me so."

"Shoot him, I suppose," put in Margaret, with laughing eyes. "That would be a fatal blow to my hopes. I beg you will spare me the humiliation of failure. And please give Brian credit on his own account."

"Certainly, my dear, all he deserves; though I must add that I don't consider him unduly fat. Alice, isn't that you?"

"I told you he was a fat man," she said, smiling at the Colonel. "I am sure he is not so fat as you are."

"I am so glad, dear," Margaret answered. "And I am very much pleased," she added, more gravely.

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