

queer little ways at the table, but albeit, there is not much room for improvement; on the whole, they conduct themselves not badly at the table. But I would like to ask, why do ladies when out dining, merely sip their wine, and nibble at their food? They don't eat and drink, they only sip and nibble; but at home they eat and drink. What is the restraining influence over them when they go out dining? Is it mock modesty?

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JUST IN TIME.

Up and down her pretty drawing-room, surrounded upon all sides by the dainty, costly trifles that she loved, walked Lenore Raitton, restless, fretted, indignant. Her rich silk dinner dress fitted her to perfection; upon her neck, and in her pure gold hair, diamonds shone and sparkled, as she swept backwards and forwards over the soft carpet. But the lovely eyes were full of vexation; the fair face was pale; the lines round the sweet mouth were hard and angry.

'It is really too bad.' She clenched her fists as they swung by her side. 'Late again to-night. What will our hostess say? Guy grows more and more strange and incomprehensible every day. He, who loved me so. He, who was so gay and bright, and happy—seems to turn from me. To Oh!—No—I cannot—will not, believe it!'

The door opened, and a servant brought in a telegram. Lenore snatched it from the salver, and read it eagerly.

'Go on without me—detained by business. Guy.'

Lenore crimsoned over throat and brow, and a sob escaped her. But she choked back the tears that rose to her blue eyes, and catching up her white satin cloak, threw it round her shoulders.

'Is the carriage there?' she asked the waiting servant.

'Yes, madam.'

When Mr. Raitton returns, tell him I have gone on to Mrs. Lilydale's.

The servant bowed, and taking her gloves, handkerchief, and fan from a table near, Mrs. Raitton followed him downstairs, her heart filled with mingled feelings of rage and disappointment, and stepping into her carriage drove away.

Eighteen months before, Lenore, a girl of twenty, had married a young and wealthy stockbroker, Guy Raitton. It was a love match. Fortune smiled upon the light-hearted couple, and great was the happiness they expected. That sorrow or trouble could ever touch them the happy bride did not imagine. There was misery in the world; poor people and unhappy people she knew. But she and Guy were different. They were strong and well—rich and in love. What more did they want?

For some months their lives gave them both complete satisfaction. Then, gradually, almost imperceptibly, there came a change. Guy grew erratic in his habits. One evening he would come home early, and grumble if Lenore was out. The next he would not appear till her patience was well-nigh exhausted, and then rushing in would make some lame, and, to her, insufficient excuse, and hurry up to his dressing-room, from whence he would emerge, half-an-hour late, for the dinner-party to which they had been invited. To his wife's fretful complaints he paid little heed. He seemed to have grown careless of her feelings, and was moody and taciturn.

'He has ceased to love me,' Lenore cried in an agony of tears. 'I can feel that when he looks at me—hear it in his voice when he speaks to me.'

And having thus decided, the poor girl became restless and unhappy. Her manner to her husband stiffened, and she spoke to him coldly, or in a voice full of irritation and annoyance.

Upon several occasions Guy looked at her imploringly, and seemed about to tell her something; then turned suddenly away, without speaking. And the breach that separated them grew wider than ever.

'Decidedly, this cannot go on,' reflected Lenore as she drove along. 'Guy makes a fool of me, treating me as he does. It must and shall be stopped.' And she entered Mrs. Lilydale's drawing-room, a red and burning spot upon each cheek.

'Twenty minutes later, when his host and hostess had given him up, Guy walked in, full of apologies; and they went down to dinner.'

Beside Lenore sat Randolph Gordon. He was a good-looking man, with plenty of money and nothing to do but kill time as easily and pleasantly as possible. Before her marriage, he had been madly in love with the girl, and had never forgiven her for having refused him and accepted Guy Raitton. And the sight of their happiness enraged and embittered him.

So when Lenore entered Mrs. Lilydale's drawing-room alone, her lovely

face showing evident signs of distress, she smiled.

'The little rift within the lute' at last," he thought, well pleased. Good friend Guy is not all she expected. And he took his seat at the table, determined to make the most of the occasion. From where she sat, Lenore could just see her husband and the lady he had taken in to dinner, a pretty widow with a laughing manner, and a low, purring voice. Guy and she seemed absorbed in each other. He was bending towards her, talking confidentially, whilst she listened with earnest and marked attention.

'Not one glance for me,' Lenore thought bitterly. 'Not a look in my direction.'

'I suppose you sometimes go out without your husband now, Mrs. Raitton?' said Gordon suddenly. 'He's often seen in places alone, I hear. So I trust you'll follow his good example and give your friends a chance.'

Lenore's eye gleamed, and she bit her lip.

'I'm at a loss to know what you mean, Mr. Gordon.'

'Oh, nothing—only, Mrs. Molyneux, Freda, and a few pleasant fellows whom you know are to be my guests at the opera and a supper at the Savoy to-morrow night. Will you honour me by joining us?'

'Yes, if Guy—'

'But,' smiling, 'I don't want Guy. Husbands are taboos. Besides, he wouldn't come. He doesn't like either Freda—or me—'

'Neither do I,' almost slipped from Lenore unawares. But she restrained herself and said quietly, 'I don't think he could come. He's busy, and we may have an engagement to dinner.'

'But you may not, and if he's busy you'll be alone,' he cried eagerly. 'So say you'll come. I'll call for you about eight. And if you are not out—'

'But my husband may be at home and want me. I'll send you a note in the morning.'

'Don't trouble, please I'll call on chance.'

'Very well—if you will. But I don't think I'll go.'

'And I think you will,' muttered Gordon under his breath. Then turning to her he said quietly—

'Do if you can. It will give us all so much pleasure.' And the subject was dismissed.

Next evening, Lenore, having told Guy in the morning that she wished to dine early, sat down to table alone. No telegram or message of any kind had come to plead business as an excuse for his delay, and she felt injured and insulted.

'He has been seen in places alone—is known to neglect me—already,' she cried. 'Oh! what shall I do? How shall I bear it?'

The visitors' bell pealed through the house, and a wave of crimson swept over Lenore's face, then faded, leaving her white as marble.

'Alone?' said Randolph Gordon, stepping lightly into the room, his opera hat under his arm. 'Just what I thought, and hoped. Mrs. Molyneux is in her carriage at the door. Will you come?'

'Guy will not like it,' Lenore told herself. 'He thinks these people fast. Well, it will teach him a lesson. If he neglects me, I must look to others for amusement. And yet—'

'Guy is having a lively evening,' Gordon said, carelessly. 'I saw him in the club, surrounded by a number of choice spirits.'

Lenore flushed and pressed her hands together convulsively.

'I need not be so particular,' she thought, bitterly. And turning to a servant, she told him to fetch her cloak and gloves.

When the opera was over, and Lenore and her friends stood in the crush-room, waiting for their carriages to take them on to the Savoy, a cry from the news-vendors startled them.

'Terrible failure in the city. Suicide of a well-known stockbroker.'

'How reckless these city men are!' remarked Mrs. Molyneux. 'I hope Guy is careful, Lenore.'

'Don't frighten her,' cried Gordon. 'Lawrence, Raitton, and Stebbing could weather any storm. Their credit is unlimited.'

Lenore believed what he said was true. Her husband's firm was a wealthy one. Nothing, she had been told, could shake or injure it. Yet certain though she was of this, she felt a pang at her heart, and a sense of uneasiness and alarm that she could scarcely account for. The

lights and laughter and gaiety became all at once unbearable. And she determined to give up the supper at the Savoy and go home.

'—I am not uneasy,' she cried, the tone of her voice betraying her words, as notwithstanding the regret and remonstrance of her friends she got into her carriage and drove away.

'Is your master in?' she asked quickly, as she entered the hall.

'Yes, madam. Master's in the library. But he leaves town by the 12.30 train.'

'Oh, God! I am just in time,' Lenore threw aside her long, satin cloak, and sick and faint, overcome by a feeling of approaching evil, entered the library.

Guy sat in his chair beside the writing table, his head in his hands, his whole attitude one of dejection and despair.

'Guy,' cried Lenore, and at the sound of her voice he looked up.

'What is wrong? Oh, what is wrong?' she asked, remembering nothing but her love, as she saw the wild misery in his young face.

'Everything for me,' he answered, wearily, 'if I live. Old Lawrence could not bear it—he is dead—and I—We're smashed, Lenore—ruined! But you're all right. Your money is settled. And your father will take you home.' Sobs choked him, and his head fell forward upon his breast.

'My father—take me home?' The girl grew white as death; her breath came in quick, short gasps.

'And you—Guy—where will you go?'

'God knows. It matters little.'

She went close to him and laid her hand gently on his shoulder.

'And our love, and our home, and our happiness? Do they not matter?'

'They are gone! You'll get on without me, Lenore. Why, all this time you have been happy, have you never noticed my misery, the trouble I was in?'

'Never noticed?' she moaned. 'Oh, yes, I noticed—too well. But—with a long-drawn sob, 'I feared—dreaded—worse than—'

He sat up and gazed at her, his white lips quivering.

'Worse? What could be worse than the loss of every penny I possess! What worse than the absolute ruin that stares me in the face?'

Her eyes fell before his, the colour deepened in her cheek.

'For me,' she whispered, 'there would be one loss far above all that—the loss of your love.'

'Lenore! But you did not seem to care. You—'

'I was miserable. You kept me in the dark, and I fancied, dreaded, that you had ceased to love me.'

'My darling!' He caught her in his arms, and rained tender, passionate kisses upon the little tremulous mouth and tear-stained face. 'I wished to spare you—'

'And succeeded in making me thoroughly wretched. Believe me, dearest; a husband should tell his wife everything. I do not fear poverty, but I did, and do, fear the loss of your love. Since that is mine I care little about the money. Oh, Guy, be courageous. You can begin again. I'll be wiser and better able to help you now. Together we'll be strong and happy, no matter how poor we are.'

'My darling!' He pressed her to his heart, his eyes shining with love and courage. 'Your brave words have saved me, given me fresh life. I feel ready now to face any storm. God bless you!'

(The End.)

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