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THE WOOLING OF ERNA

The men exchanged amused glances, and the head groom led the way into the stables, where the marquis kept his choice horses. He no longer rode himself, but it was a matter of pride with him to keep the best of stock. And the stables were kept like a lady's parlor.

"Why, you have some good horses, and keep them well, don't you?" ejaculated Erna, approvingly.

"We do our best," said the gratified groom.

Erna stopped suddenly behind a noble-looking animal—a bright bay, who stood, even in the stable, as if on parade.

"There's a beauty!" she cried, and started to go in by his side in the stall. "I beg your pardon, miss!" exclaimed the man in alarm, "but it might be dangerous. That horse is strange, and I don't know his ways."

Erna smiled, as one who will who has no fear of horses, and pushed him aside while she boldly went into the stall. The horse worked his ears and showed the whites of his eyes, much to the terror of the groom; but Erna went calmly to his head and began to pat him on his glossy neck. Then suddenly she stopped and scrutinized the animal closely.

Then she stood erect, and with a pale face turned to the groom and cried out: "Where did this horse come from? It is Selim."

"Lord Aubrey's horse, miss."

"Sent by his lordship, for his use."

"But Lord Aubrey is not here."

"Begun your pardon, miss, he came last night."

Erna turned her face away and commenced patting the horse, which seemed to recognize her now, and to enjoy being petted by her. She was silent so long that the groom ventured to say:

"He's a good horse, they do say."

"The best I ever saw," said Erna. "I rode him only once, but it was a most glorious ride."

"You rode him, miss?" exclaimed the man. "Then you must be a good one, beggin' your pardon for the liberty! I'm told he's a hard one to manage."

"Yes," she said, and her face flushed, "but he and I got along very well together. Ah! if you only had such another for me this morning!"

"Dandy's as good, if I do say it," the groom declared, with quick pride.

"Let me see Dandy!"

He led her to a glossy chestnut, who certainly looked as lordly as Selim; but he betrayed none of the mischief of that animal.

"Ah! he is a beauty!" she joyously declared. "Let me have him! There is no reason why I should not ride him, is there? The marquis would not object?"

"You were to have whatever you wanted, miss," said the groom.

Erna flushed, noting the words and manner of the man as indicating that she was more than a mere guest in the castle. She said nothing, however, but waited for Dandy to be saddled and taken out, when she mounted him and reassured the groom of her ability to manage him, if he had been in any doubt, by the quiet way she controlled him.

She knew she must have a groom to go with her, and she made no protest against it; though it would have suited her mood better to have gone alone so that she might gallop some calm into her soul. A sudden thought made her turn as she was riding out of the court.

"Are there any other guests that came last night?" she asked of the groom.

"Lord and Lady Moreham and Lady Gertrude, I believe, miss," was the answer.

Erna wheeled Dandy about and touched him sharply with the whip so that he leaped high and started off at a sharp pace past the castle, the noise of his clattering hoofs falling on the ears of more than one dozing guest.

Down through a noble avenue of trees, out into the park and so on out to the main road Erna dashed, letting Dandy have pretty nearly his own way, and leaving the groom well in the rear. Then it occurred to her that while it might be very pleasant for her to be dashing at this rate, it was anything but good for Dandy to be breathed right from the stable.

So she checked him by a slight pressure, feeling better already, and let him dance along in his own way, much to the relief of the groom, who did not relish being left so far in the rear.

There was a sense of freedom in this lonely ride in the fresh morning air that she had not felt since the days when she was happy at Aubrey, before the earl, with his hated ways, had come to make her miserable. Yes, she realized it fully; she had been perfectly happy until he came, and she had been miserable most of the time since. She leaned over and patted Dandy's arched neck.

"Good boy," she murmured, caressingly. "Ah, I might have you for my own if I would say the word! Ugh! don't let me think of it! Sell myself to that old man! And yet it is expected of me. As if I did not know why I was invited here! As if I did not know everything is being done for my pleasure! And Lady Gertrude will have Selim!"

The thought stung her. She had been going leisurely along for nearly half an hour, and Dandy was prancing with a desire to stretch his sinewy limbs. She flapped the reins on his neck and he shook his head and leaped into a long, free gallop. Behind her sounded the best of another horse's hoofs.

"The groom is doing better," she thought. "Why, he is coming up to me. Go on, Dandy."

Dandy understood. Besides, he, too, heard the hoof-beats behind him, and he was unwilling to be caught. He stretched his neck and flew swiftly on. But the clattering behind came nearer, and Erna turned her head with some indignation, as well as with some surprise that the horse the groom rode should be able to overtake Dandy. Her face paled and flushed.

"Lord Aubrey!" she muttered.

"I beg your pardon," he said, urging Selim to her side, "for taking this liberty. They told me at the stables that you had gone out, and when I saw you ahead of me, I knew who it was."

"You do not need to apologize," she answered coldly. "You are surely at liberty to ride where you will."

"I apologize for intruding on you," he said.

"That need not trouble you," she said brusquely. "I shall return to the castle in a few minutes."

"I hope you will not let me drive you home," he said.

"I let no one drive me," she answered. "You said you would be friends with me," he said, a pained look mingling with the eager admiration with which he had been regarding her.

She turned with flashing eyes. "You do not need to apologize," she retorted. "I said distinctly that I could not force my liking."

"Yes, you did say so. I did not mean to misquote you. I was thinking more of my hopes than of what you did actually say. Won't you be friends? I have done everything you demanded, and I will do anything more to win your kind regard. Why are you so cold to me?"

"Why should I be anything else?" she demanded.

"For no reason excepting that I ask very earnestly for your good-will. I know that I have offended you, and that I acted like a self-sufficient fellow when we first met. Won't you accept my apology?"

She turned and looked into his eyes, her face betraying more emotion than he had suspected.

"Why should it matter to you whether I am friendly or not?" she asked, her voice quivering a little.

"I don't know," he replied. "It does not matter. I keep wondering all the time how I can convince you that I value your good-will. I often think of the day on the cliff when you offered me your hearty good-will and fellowship, and I am aghast at myself for acting as I did. Won't you believe that I thought I was doing what was best for you?"

"I suppose," said Erna reflectively, "that you thought yourself a very superior being."

He smiled gravely.

"That is one way of stating it," he said; "I think I was at that time almost dead to all human emotion. If you only knew what I had gone through, you might find it easier to forgive me."

"I forgive you," she said, suddenly, putting her hand out in her old frank way.

He took the little hand eagerly, thinking within himself that she certainly had a charming way of coming around. "It is very good of you," he said, gratefully.

"No, it is not," she replied. "I want to be friends, or I would not be."

She laughed joyously, feeling happier than she would have liked to own; and he thought he had never seen anything as beautiful as she looked at that moment.

"I am glad I followed you," he said, cautiously.

"Followed me?" she repeated.

He looked dismayed for a moment, and then laughed, and said, frankly: "It is the truth. I heard you gallop by my window. I jumped up to see who it was, fearing it might be Lady Gertrude, who had begged me to bring Selim here for her to try. When I saw it was you, I hurried down and came in pursuit. You are not offended?"

"Oh, no," she answered, with a coldness in marked contrast with her previous joyousness. "Why should I be offended? I ought to be proud that you would take so much trouble. There is a very pretty wall, with water the other side. They said at the stable that this horse was as good as Selim. Here is a chance to make a test; I know what Selim can do."

She gathered up the reins, to put Dandy at the walk; but Aubrey, after a hasty glance at the jump, put his hand out and caught her bridle.

"It would be madness! It is an impossible jump. It is worse than the wall."

"Let go," she said, her face pale and set. "I am going to try."

"I cannot permit it," he replied, his blue eyes fixed on her with determination written in them.

"It seems to me," she said, in that fierce tone of hers, which betrayed such a war of passion within her, "that you are assuming a great deal. By what right do you dare to tell me what you will or will not permit?"

"The right of one human being to prevent an act of criminal recklessness in another. Please, Erna, be reasonable!"

"Release the rein!" she cried, in a stifled voice.

"I will not until you promise not to make the mad attempt. Even to keep your friendship, which I so value, I will not do it."

She laughed with bitter scorn. Her brown eyes were black with anger. "Release the rein!" she panted.

"No."

She raised her fling whip threateningly. "I will strike you!" she cried, furiously.

CHAPTER XXIII

There were pain and distress in the steady blue eyes that looked into the furious brown ones, but not an eyelash quivered under the expected blow from the uplifted whip.

For a moment they remained thus, the darkness deepening in Erna's eyes, and then fading out. The whip slowly sank, and Erna's bosom rose and fell like a stormy sea. Then she spoke in a strangled voice.

"Which way do you go?" she demanded.

"You are angry with me," he said, regretfully.

"I hate you!" she cried. "I came out to be alone, and you thrust yourself upon me. The least you can do is to leave me. You cannot expect to remain here forever hiding my ruin. Do you find something heroic in your attitude? To me it is ridiculous! There the groom is coming. I shall appeal to him."

The restive horses had kept moving uneasily on all the while, and were now in such a place that to make the jump Erna would have been obliged to turn

around, which would have enabled the earl to intercept her. He released the rein, saying in a troubled tone: "Why is it my fortune to anger you?"

"I do not care to guess your riddles," she angrily retorted. "I wish to continue my ride. Will you be good enough to clear your way, and let me go mine?"

He bowed low, his face pale and troubled, and without a word turned Selim toward the direction of the Castle and rode away. Erna, with head erect and eyes burning, touched Dandy with her whip and darted forward at a swift pace.

On and on she went for a mile and more; then she checked Dandy and put him at a low fence. Then she tried a water jump, and after that a wall.

Her face was pale and set, and her eyes were dark and flashing. She had turned back when the groom came up with her. He dropped behind her, wondering at her blazing eyes, but setting them down to the exhilaration of risk.

"I'll do it if I break my neck," she muttered. Then she rode on, twisting and bending the pliable reins in her nervous fingers. "He brought Selim here to make her his conquest. He followed me to trifle with me. Would he dare would he dare? Oh, I will make him suffer for it, and her too. But I will make the jump if it kills me."

She knew it was a reckless thing to do, but she was so furious with the earl and still more furious with herself, that she would not have been dissuaded by any argument that could have been advanced.

But she did not wish to fail if she could help it. So when she reached the jump on her return, she turned to it and examined it. It was a terrible jump, with death or broken bones lurking on the other side. But Erna's was a temper so furious that the danger was an added attraction.

"That's the envy of the country, miss," said the groom, touching his cap.

"Why," she curtly demanded.

"It looks tempting, but nobody dares try it."

"Selim," ejaculated Erna, closing her white teeth.

"Surely, miss—," began the groom. "Heaven's mercy! she'll be killed!"

He could not move to overtake her. Besides, it would have been useless, and he could only sit there and stare in horror at the fool-hardy attempt.

Erna had brought the whip down on Dandy's flank, and he had sprung forward as if projected from a gun. He knew what he was expected to do as well as if he had understood what had been said. For a moment he seemed disposed to shrink it, but as the groom noted with horror-stricken admiration, Erna steadied him, slowed him a trifle, and got him into his stride.

It was an ugly wall, with a bad take-off and a worse landing. But Erna had studied all that and had unerringly picked out the best spot to make the attempt. On flew Dandy, steady now, and determined to do honor to the courage of his mad rider.

"Hi," she cried, and lifted her whip. Dandy planted his feet fairly on the take-off selected, and with a mighty effort, rose in the air, his magnificent muscles standing out in his thighs like ridges of iron.

Over he flew, his nostrils distended, his large eyes standing out of his gallant head, and seeming to almost buoy himself in the air. The wall and water stretched beneath him. Erna sat him as if a part with him, now leaning forward, now swaying backward.

There was a dread instant of uncertainty, when the noble animal was safe on the other side. Over he dashed Lord Aubrey; she had made the jump in spite of him; and she would go home triumphant. Dandy quivered in every muscle, but he took the smaller jump lower down in gallant style and seemed to delight in the praise of his rider.

The groom was dumb with astonishment and admiration. Thereafter the model of womanhood, in his eyes, would be Miss March; and at that moment the worst he wished her was that she would marry the marquis, his master, and that he would die within a month of the wedding.

None of the guests were yet stirring when Erna returned to the castle, and she shut herself in her apartments and remained there until late in the morning, when Violet came to seek her, crying out the moment she was admitted.

"Why, Erna! what have you been doing?"

"Well, what have I been doing?" inquired Erna, quietly.

"Why, what are you talking about you?" said Violet, who went out this morning to ride, and took a jump nobody has ever dared to take before.

"They are making a great fuss over very little," said Erna.

"That sounds well from you, my dear, but nobody else would say it. But what do you think—who do you think is here?"

"Lord Aubrey and the Morehams," said Erna, composedly.

"Oh, you know that. Well, do come and show yourself. They are all crazy to see you. I wonder why the marquis asked the earl and Lady Gertrude here. He must have known you were not good friends."

"You are mistaken," replied Erna; "we are the best of friends. The earl was out riding with me this morning, part of the time."

Violet shrugged her shoulders, like one who feels that she may be treading on unsafe ground.

"Well, do come down," she said. "Gertrude is just green with envy at your performance of this morning; but I don't believe she intends trying it, too."

About the same time Lady Romley was talking privately with the marquis. "Well, it's too late now," said the marchioness. "All we can do is to watch and wait. Erna may treat him horribly. She did the last time they met, and may again. For your sake, my dear marquis, I hope she will."

The marquis was in despair.

"But," he protested, "Aubrey is as good as engaged to Lady Gertrude, they say."

"They say!" repeated Lady Romley, scornfully. "Wait until it is announced. I wish he were engaged to her. But to think of bringing them here! Marquis, I would as lief have thrown a match into a powder magazine."

Lord Aubrey, in the meantime, was having a very wretched time of it. He was well aware of the fact that he ought to utterly condemn any young woman who would fly into such a passion.

"What evil spirit possessed you to in-

vite the Earl of Aubrey here?" she demanded, with considerable asperity.

"Why—why—," stammered the marquis, taken aback by the tone, "isn't he a kinsman of Erna?"

"Isn't he a fascinating man?" retorted the marchioness, inwardly thinking men the stupidest of creation. "Think of his reputation! Think of his good looks, his wealth, his youth! I thought you knew he was the very man of men you should not have here. You certainly seemed to speak that way when you conferred with me at Romley."

"Aubrey!" cried the marquis. "Did you mean Aubrey? I thought you referred to Captain Merriweather."

Sometimes Erna had that morning. But, in fact, the more he thought of Erna, the more he dwelt on the astonishing beauty she had displayed in her fury.

"What a termagant!" he said; and then he thought: "Where is the other girl who would have dared to do that jump?"

"What I can't comprehend," he reflected, "is why she should so suddenly become angry with me, just at the very moment when I was rejoicing in the friendship I had been longing for. For a few moments there I was as happy as a boy. She is a strangely fascinating creature. I suppose now she will not look at me again."

When Erna came down she was surrounded, according to custom, and was soon busy answering questions, and laughingly protested that she would never have taken the jump if she had known so much fame was to be acquired by it. Then, when she saw the opportunity, she exclaimed:

"It is not that Lady Gertrude I see over there by the Earl of Aubrey! I saw the earl this morning. He, too, was out riding."

(To be continued.)

DIFFERENCE IN THEM.

The head of a big firm of contractors was walking around the premises and stopped to converse with old George, a staid man.

"Well, George, how goes it?" he said. "Fair to middlin', sir," George answered. "Fair to middlin'."

He continued to rub down a bay horse, while the other looked on in silence. "Me and this 'ere horse," George said, suddenly, "has worked for you sixteen years."

"Well, well," said the boss, thinking a little guiltily of George's very low wage. "And I suppose you are pretty highly valued, George, eh?"

"T'm," said George. "Both of us was took ill last week, and they got a doctor for the horse, but they just docked my pay!"

ONLY ONE CURE FOR A BAD STOMACH

Indigestion and Similar Troubles Must be Treated Through the Blood.

Indigestion can be treated in many ways, but it can be cured in only one way—through the blood. Purgatives they move the food on still undigested. That weakens the whole system, uses up the natural juices of the body and leaves the stomach and bowels parched and sore. It is a cause of indigestion—not a cure. Others try predigested foods and peptonized drugs. But drugs which digest the food for the stomach really weaken its power. The digestive organs can never do the work properly until they are strong enough to do it for themselves. Nothing can give the stomach that power but the new, rich, red blood so abundantly supplied by Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. So the reason for their success is plain. The health of the stomach depends upon the blood in its delicate veins. If the blood is weak and watery the gastric glands haven't the strength to secrete the juices which alone can digest the food. If the blood is loaded with impurities it cannot absorb the good from the food when it is digested. Nothing can stimulate the glands, and nothing can absorb the nourishment but pure, red blood. And nothing can give that pure, red blood but Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. Mrs. Alfred Gallant, Mill River, P. E. I., says: "For several years, previous and up to two years ago, I suffered continually from indigestion. I could not eat enough to keep my strength, and what little I did eat, no matter what kind of food, did great pains, so that I became much reduced in flesh, strength and energy. I consulted several doctors and took medicine from them, but without any benefit whatever. On the advice of a friend I began to take Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and soon good results were noticed. I could slightly increase the amount of food day after day, and suffered no inconvenience, until after taking ten boxes I could eat any kind of food, and in a short time got back to my normal state of health, and feel that Dr. Williams' Pink Pills have surely cured me of a most stubborn case of indigestion."

You can get these Pills from any dealer in medicine or they will be sent by mail at 50 cents a box or six boxes for \$2.50 by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

SEED HAD FALLEN ON ARABLE GROUND.

A well-known prelate of the Cleveland diocese recently preached a series of sermons, his general theme being "Humility."

In the course of his sermons he necessarily dwelt upon the nothingness of man without the help of grace. His auditors were the gentle nuns of the Villa Convent, and the convent school pupils made up of many young ladies, girls and small boys.

At the conclusion of the sermons, says the Leader, the prelate, while divesting himself of the garments of the altar service, turned to the sanctuary boys, lads of 10 or 11 years. "What are you?" inquired the venerable priest of one of the two boys. Quick as a flash came back the answer, "I'm an Irishman, and I'm proud of it." "And what are you?" he asked the other lad. Crossing his little hands upon his breast, he quietly rejoined, "Father, I have been listening. I am nothing."

The aged administrator of the Cleveland diocese chuckles as he unfolds the tale. The seed had evidently fallen on arable ground.

"Only Six Weeks to Live"

Constipation, Biliousness, Indigestion, Rheumatism.

A Dying Woman Rescued Through the timely use of Dr. Hamilton's Pills.

"My doctor told me I had only six weeks to live—that nothing human could help me, but to-day I am hearty and well, because I took a long treatment with Dr. Hamilton's Pills—they saved my life."

Continuing her declaration, Mrs. Jamieson says: "I had from childhood been a sufferer from biliousness, and liver complaint. I suffered excessively from wind and could not eat my food without feeling ill afterwards. Sometimes I was so bad I couldn't stand up straight for the pain. The wind settled in my stomach, chest and sides, and always caused blinding headaches. At times I seemed one mass of aches and pains—a became rheumatic because my blood was so poor. The benefit I received from the first box of Dr. Hamilton's Pills encouraged me and I continued their use, three to five pills a week, for several months and was brought to the most perfect condition of health."

If you suffer from constipation, flatulence, indigestion, palpitation, anemia, headaches, nervousness, sleeplessness, depression, general debility, loss of appetite, liver and kidney troubles, acute and chronic dyspepsia, or any form of stomach and digestive weakness, you may look with certain hope for a complete cure by the use of Dr. Hamilton's Pills of Mandrake and Butternut. Safe, mild and sure to cure. Price, 25c. per box, or five boxes for \$1.00 at all dealers or The Cattaraugus Company, Kingston, Ont.

MATCHLESS MISERY.

I'm disappointed, pained and sad; My heart down at my feet, My case is bad, and very bad, My misery complete!