

THE EVENING NEWS.

Monday, June 19, 1871.

[From the LONDON MAGAZINE.]
S U B S T I T U T I O N .

[CONTINUED.]

All this had passed in the Fall, and it was now approaching Christmas time. Charlotte's trifling fingers were busy over a gift for St. Clair, and one evening when she was expressing her desire with it in her hand, ready to tuck it away out of sight the moment she heard his ring at the door. During the early days of their engagement he had found the new amusement so fascinating that very few evenings found him absent from her side. After a time he became somewhat remiss; but hers was that large-hearted love which exacts no large attention from its object than is bestowed without any consciousness of revering. She never grumbled or fretted when Rainsford pleased other engagements; she wanted him to use his own free will, and not be tied down by a feeling of obligation to her. Neither did it enter her head to be jealous. Secure in her confidence of his affection, she regarded whatever he did as the right thing, and was always happy when he came to her, tranquilly happy when he stayed away, for the thought of him was always with her; and so, on the evening of which we speak, she sat with her work in her hand, listening eagerly for the sound of the door-bell.

She waited in vain. Hour after hour passed, and nothing but silence and broken; and then, as women will, she began to have visions of fearful possibilities. Had he been waylaid? murdered? He certainly said he would come! The daily papers at that time were filled with accounts of galloping, then but newly come into fashion. "Was he, on his way to her, selected as one of the victims?" As the evening wore on, her anxiety became almost unbearable; she could do nothing; and when the last hope of seeing him had passed by, she went to her room to spend the night in tossing upon her bed and waiting wearily for the morning.

The next day, when she had seen her grandfather comfortably settled with his cigar and his paper, she resolved to put an end to her suspense, and made some trifling errand excuse for calling on Mrs. Clarendon's sister. Business had been so slow, so she knew there was no danger of meeting him; unless he were confined to the house by illness; and that could hardly be the case, or he would have sent her word. The gay manner in which Neddie Rainsford received her showed at once there had been no mishap.

"Why didn't you go with us to the opera last night?" inquired this young lady, who was a year or two older than Charlotte. "I am sorry, I take it for granted you couldn't go," Clarendon told me to ask Estelle May to take the vacant seat in our box. The music was perfectly splendid, and how Estelle did carry on! The way she flirted with St. Clair would have made you laugh. Of course he didn't respond, but it was as plain as day that she was trying to captivate him. You know she's never satisfied unless she has some man or other in her toto, and I suppose she is the only one at hand just then. But what a regular high-flyer she is, though!"

Charlotte went home feeling very sober, though her worst fears were relieved, she thought, she would have found time to see him for five minutes—but not satisfied! She had determined that he would not be exacting, and now she should even think herself neglected. Doubtless he had some good reason for asking Neddie, some obligation to the family—perhaps, at all events it must be right, for he had done it.

Of the girl herself she felt no dread. It did not occur to her that this little slight mass of shallowness, with her snobbish ways, her bold disregard of conventional proprieties, her flippant tongue and unscrupulous aside glances could by any sane man be fit for a moment in competition with himself, and the noble, womanly qualities she possessed. Compared with him, to be sure, the humility of true love made her acknowledge herself inferior; but compared with any other woman she knew there were none on earth who would make him as happy as his Charlotte.

By the next evening she had regained her cheerfulness, and again awaited his coming with eager longing. She would not introduce the subject, but would laugh away his apologies with a carelessness that would have vexed even the watchful guardian angel of all of the things he should not be afraid of her.

With these pleasant thoughts nestled down in her heart, she went through another long evening. At last her womanly pride began to be stirred. She was wounded, to the quick, but still tried to believe that it would all be explained away. He might not be well, or might have been detained down town on business. Of course, the moment he came she should laugh at herself for her anxiety. She thought it was easier to tolerate it him, unless he had some secret reason why she had heard even married women say that all men were inconsiderate. She would wait.

On the day after this second solitary evening, she had a call from one of those female gaffines whose special business in life seems to be to sting, without aim or object. She was a little jealous of Charlotte, for Rainsford had once been a suitor of the former, and the recollection of it still retained keenness to the wretched girl.

"Why won't you be at Mrs. Mansfield's ball last evening, Lottie?" she inquired. "I can tell you you were invited, to keep a couple of friends of your in-laws."

"I'm not acquainted with Mrs. Mansfield's daughter, and—smiled smilingly. "I don't consider it any part of my business to be at my in-laws' ball in order, either!"

"You would have thought it your business if she had seen them!" replied her tormentor. "Fifteen's no name for it! Anyone would have thought they were just engaged, to have looked on Estelle fairly devoured him alive—you know she has been enough for anything; and as for him—well, of course, I won't say anything about him in the presence of others."

"Oh, no; that isn't the slightest occasion to," said Charlotte. "How did you enjoy yourself?"

To be continued.

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