

middle of the street, and as far as I could make out was cloaking an old woman in a circular waterproof cloak. She looked old and feeble. That done he proceeded to unfurl her umbrella, for the threatening skies were already dropping big, splashing rain-drops, and held it over her, moderating his swinging stride to her short, feeble steps. I noted every detail with a secret, even proprietary pride in him, that was in no way justified. The action savoured of a tender protective chivalry that speaks to a woman's heart.

Mrs. St. Clare had stepped on to the pavement to avoid the gutter, thus bringing me nearer to Bertha again.

"Bertha," I whispered impatiently, "it is Mr. Templeton. I must speak to him."

She half grasped my arm to prevent me carrying out my purpose.

"You must do nothing of the sort," she said hurriedly. "Not just now at any rate. It would be extremely awkward. Besides it is raining and we must take the short cut home. We turn up here."

And she swept me up a side-way retaining my arm under pretence of sharing my umbrella. So we turned off the village street and up the short cut without Mr. Templeton seeing us.

It was the first tiny cloud rising on my horizon, and before twenty-four hours had passed it showed in all its black distinctness.

Mrs. St. Clare stayed to lunch and talked evenly on, never succeeding in infusing a particle of interest into her multitude of words.

She left before tea, however, and then Bertha and I took two camp-chairs on to the terrace in front of the house. The landscape was the same I had looked at in the morning, but clouded over in the subdued light of the autumn afternoon. Or it comes to me now in memory, clouded over, because the blow was struck then that clouded all my after-life.

Bertha herself opened the subject that was uppermost in my thoughts.

"By the way," she said. "Were you not surprised to see Mr. Templeton? I forgot to mention his being here. He comes very regularly for the week-ends."

"I was surprised," I said coldly. "And why would you not let me speak to him? He would think it so odd. He is a very special friend of mine."

"It would have been so awkward," said Bertha stifling an affected yawn, "his being

with that old body. Mrs. St. Clare would have thought it odd, and he himself might have felt put out."

"Odd!" I exclaimed. "Surely your friends must be very peculiar to be unable to appreciate a chivalry that prompts a gentleman to come to the assistance of any woman, even were she an old apple woman," I began hotly, but Bertha interposed.

"My dear," she rejoined with a disagreeable little smile, "the chivalrous part they might have understood. It was the *filial* part I was afraid might baffle them. Perhaps I should explain that the old lady in the poke bonnet and the black waterproof is Edward Templeton's mother."

Circumstances have conspired all my life to repress any outward sign of emotion in me. I have wonderful self-control.

"You are joking, Bertha," I said, but the words sounded to my own ears as if they were clipped short and would barely carry. While I uttered them I knew that Bertha was in sober earnest.

"I never was more serious in my life," she returned. "Ask any one in the village where old Widow Templeton lives, a little cottage on the outskirts. I'll drive you past it tomorrow if you like. Old Templeton died not long ago, but before we came. I don't know what he was, connected with trade somehow I believe. There's a hoydenish brother in a small lawyer's office in Milltown, and a sister—married—I've not seen her—a vulgar, overdressed creature probably. Report says this son is of a Quixotic turn, so I should not wonder if he took his old mother to live with him now that the sister is gone."

"Picture the astonishment of Midford on the arrival of the old lady! I like to amuse myself by imagining the scene. She probably drops her 'h's' and does not know the A B C of society. Do you imagine he would expect his friends to call upon her? My dear, can you picture Lady Theresa for instance being introduced to her? I think I see her aristocratic nose in the air and her tortoise-shell *pince-nez* poised thereon. Do you think the old lady would make her a curtsy? And, my dear, can you picture the hoyden brother clamping across Lady Theresa's best Wilton pile with his hob-nailed boots?"

"I suppose you mean to be witty, Bertha?" I interrupted at last.

"My dear, it is the situation that is humorous, I assure you, not I. But we can

talk of something else if you prefer it. But really, poor fellow, it is a terrible handicap for him."

I made no answer to her words. I looked out over the landscape and I remember noticing with a long-drawn, inward shudder, that the sun was going down.

"Let us go in," said Bertha by-and-by. "It is getting chilly."

That night stands out in my memory. Such nights do not come to us without leaving their scar behind. I sat through it—mostly at the window, and when the stars twinkled more faintly, finally fading into the struggling grey dawn, I realised that everything in heaven and earth was changed.

Bertha watched me narrowly next day, with the expression of a person seeing physical symptoms she thinks she can account for by other than physical causes. But she said nothing.

There was one thing I had a curious fancy to ask her before leaving. I left it till near the end. Mr. Wilmot had been called away to see a parishioner before luncheon was over on my last day. Now was my chance.

"Bertha," I said, "you must find it a help to have a husband like Mr. Wilmot."

"A help!" she repeated. "How do you mean? I suppose we help each other. We are opposites. He is silent and I am talkative. He is slow. I am quick and impulsive. He is visionary and I am nothing if not thoroughly practical. It is a sort of Jack Sprat arrangement and works admirably."

"I don't quite mean that," I said. "I mean rather, spiritually. I think a man who could preach such a sermon on unworldliness as Sunday's must be a man to lean upon."

"Oh, that," she returned, shrugging her shoulders. "I see now what you mean, but I never take a man's sermon as a criterion of himself. Not that I am depreciating Theodore. He is very well in his way. But I always think it best to accept pulpit utterances with the precautionary grain of salt, don't you know?"

I looked at her wistfully, only half-aware myself how much her light words weighed with me.

I remember yet how she looked, faultlessly dressed in a well-fitting gown of purple cloth trimmed with chinchilla. Perhaps after all daily contact with a man better than oneself did not make the impression I had imagined.

(To be concluded.)

SOAP.

SOAP being an article of universal necessity, it may be useful to learn something about its composition, and it is pleasant to know at the outset that most of the toilet soaps made by English firms are the very best that are made anywhere. The French come next, but the Germans use cocoa-nut oil largely as a basis of their soaps, and this is found to be not only wasteful, but in many cases injurious to the skin. Till comparatively lately, soap in this country was always made from the best tallow, melted, purified, and scented, but now transparent soaps are made with glycerine and alcohol.

The necessity for frequent ablutions of the person and the washing of clothes was, and is, obligatory as a religious duty on the Jews and Mahomedans, and was strictly enforced in the case of both priests and worshippers at the Temple, and this could hardly have been effectual without some sort of soap. We know that scented saponaceous clay was used by the Greeks and Persians. Nevertheless, we incline to the idea that manufacture of olive oil soap was an ancient Jewish art.

The Castile soap with which we were

familiar in our early days, was probably an art carried to Spain by the Jews after they were exiled from the Holy Land, and it was primarily an olive oil soap.

Soap made with olive oil must be more wholesome for the skin than that made from any kind of fat, but even this is now being adulterated with cocoa-nut oil, which gives it substance and a nice smooth appearance but it is deleterious to the skin. A simple olive oil soap has been made for many centuries in Palestine from the pure oil extracted from the olive berries and mixed with "alkali," or as the word in Arabic expresses it "the kali." The process of manufacture has been rough and simple, but it has been carried on to a considerable extent, and the soap was, and is still, exported to various ports of the Levant. It is not till within the last few years that Europeans in the country have taken up the idea and have produced a soap more suited to our ideas of a toilet soap.

Unfortunately however, some Europeans have added cocoa-nut oil, which, while improving the appearance of the soap, is detrimental to

its curative properties. Other olive oil soap is made in some places on the Continent, but this is often made from the refuse of olives after salad oil has been extracted, and it has a rank and disagreeable smell.

It is not easy either to colour or scent olive oil soap, as it is not neutral like fat in taking scent or colour. But the smell of the oil if properly treated is very slight and does not remain on the skin, while its curative and emollient properties are so remarkable that medical men very highly recommend it, and those who once use it seldom, if ever, return to the fatted soaps which are by no means always wholesome, and indeed, unless purchased from eminent firms, may be looked upon with considerable suspicion as actually in some cases causing skin disease. Highly coloured and highly scented soaps should be avoided, and even of the best soaps, very little should ever be used for the face, and, where anyone is sensitive to chills, care should be taken to rinse it well off any part of the body so as to prevent any choking of the pores.