

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE CAMPAIGN OPENS.

On Saturday Lewisham was first through the folding doors. In a moment he reappeared with a document extended. Mrs. Lewisham stood arrested with her dress skirt in her hand, astonished at the astonishment on his face. "I say!" said Lewisham; "just look here!"

She looked at the book that he held open before her, and perceived that its vertical ruling betokened a sordid import, that its list of items in an illegible mixture of English and German was lengthy. "1 kettle of coals 6d." occurred regularly down that portentous array and buttoned it all together. It was Madam Gadow's first bill. Ethel took it out of his hand and examined it closer. It looked no smaller closer. The overcharges were scandalous. It was curious how the humour of calling a scuttle "kettle" had evaporated.

That document, I take it, was the end of Mr. Lewisham's informal honeymoon. Its advent was the snap of that bright Prince Rupert's drop; and in a moment--Dust. For a glorious week he had lived in the persuasion that life was made of love and mystery, and now he was reminded with singular clearness that it was begotten of a struggle for existence and the Will to Live. "Confounded imposition!" fumed Mr. Lewisham, and the breakfast table was novel and ominous,

mutterings towards anger on the one hand and a certain consternation on the other. "I must give her a talking to this afternoon," said Lewisham at his watch, and after he had bundled his books into the shiny black bag, he gave the first of his kisses that was not a distinct and self-subsisting ceremony. It was usage and done in a hurry, and the door slammed as he went his way to the schools. Ethel was not coming that morning, because by special request and because she wanted to help him she was going to copy out some of his botanical notes which had fallen into arrears.

On his way to the schools Lewisham felt something suspiciously near a sinking of the heart. His preoccupation was essentially arithmetical. The thing that engaged his mind to the exclusion of all other matters is best expressed in the recognised business form.

Dr.	£	s.	d.	Cr.	£	s.	d.			
	Mr. L.	{	13	10	4-1/2		By bus fares to South			
Cash in hand	{				Kensington (late)	0	0	2		
	Mrs. L.	{	0	11	7		By six lunches at the			
					Students' Club	0	5	2-1/2		
At bank	45	0	0				By two packets of cig-			
To scholarship	1	1	0				arettes (to smoke			
							after dinner)	0	0	6
							By marriage and elope-			
							ment	4	18	10
							By necessary subse-			

quent additions to		
bride's trousseau	0	16 1
By housekeeping exs.	1	1 4-1/2
By "A few little		
things" bought by		
housekeeper	0	15 3-1/2
By Madam Gadow for		
coal, lodging and		
attendance (as per		
account rendered)	1	15 0
By missing	0	0 4
By balance	50	3 2
-----		-----
£60	3	11-1/2
-----		-----
		£60 3 11-1/2

From this it will be manifest to the most unbusiness like that, disregarding the extraordinary expenditure on the marriage, and the by no means final "few little things" Ethel had bought, outgoings exceeded income by two pounds and more, and a brief excursion into arithmetic will demonstrate that in five-and-twenty weeks the balance of the account would be nothing.

But that guinea a week was not to go on for five-and-twenty weeks, but simply for fifteen, and then the net outgoings will be well over three guineas, reducing the "law" accorded our young couple to

two-and-twenty weeks. These details are tiresome and disagreeable, no doubt, to the refined reader, but just imagine how much more disagreeable they were to Mr. Lewisham, trudging meditative to the schools. You will understand his slipping out of the laboratory, and betaking himself to the Educational Reading-room, and how it was that the observant Smithers, grinding his lecture notes against the now imminent second examination for the "Forbes," was presently perplexed to the centre of his being by the spectacle of Lewisham intent upon a pile of current periodicals, the Educational Times, the Journal of Education, the Schoolmaster, Science and Art, The University Correspondent, Nature, The Athenaeum, The Academy, and The Author.

Smithers remarked the appearance of a note-book, the jotting down of memoranda. He edged into the bay nearest Lewisham's table and approached him suddenly from the flank. "What are you after?" said Smithers in a noisy whisper and with a detective eye on the papers. He perceived Lewisham was scrutinising the advertisement column, and his perplexity increased.

"Oh--nothing," said Lewisham blandly, with his hand falling casually over his memoranda; "what's your particular little game?"

"Nothing much," said Smithers, "just mooching round. You weren't at the meeting last Friday?"

He turned a chair, knelt on it, and began whispering over the back

about Debating Society politics. Lewisham was inattentive and brief. What had he to do with these puerilities? At last Smithers went away foiled, and met Parkson by the entrance. Parkson, by-the-bye, had not spoken to Lewisham since their painful misunderstanding. He made a wide detour to his seat at the end table, and so, and by a singular rectitude of bearing and a dignified expression, showed himself aware of Lewisham's offensive presence.

Lewisham's investigations were two-fold. He wanted to discover some way of adding materially to that weekly guinea by his own exertions, and he wanted to learn the conditions of the market for typewriting. For himself he had a vague idea, an idea subsequently abandoned, that it was possible to get teaching work in evening classes during the month of March. But, except by reason of sudden death, no evening class in London changes its staff after September until July comes round again. Private tuition, moreover, offered many attractions to him, but no definite proposals. His ideas of his own possibilities were youthful or he would not have spent time in noting the conditions of application for a vacant professorship in physics at the Melbourne University. He also made a note of the vacant editorship of a monthly magazine devoted to social questions. He would not have minded doing that sort of thing at all, though the proprietor might. There was also a vacant curatorship in the Museum of Eton College.

The typewriting business was less varied and more definite. Those were the days before the violent competition of the half-educated had

brought things down to an impossible tenpence the thousand words, and the prevailing price was as high as one-and-six. Calculating that Ethel could do a thousand words in an hour and that she could work five or six hours in the day, it was evident that her contributions to the household expenses would be by no means despicable; thirty shillings a week perhaps. Lewisham was naturally elated at this discovery. He could find no advertisements of authors or others seeking typewriting, but he saw that a great number of typewriters advertised themselves in the literary papers. It was evident Ethel also must advertise. "'Scientific phraseology a speciality' might be put," meditated Lewisham. He returned to his lodgings in a hopeful mood with quite a bundle of memoranda of possible employments. He spent five shillings in stamps on the way.

After lunch, Lewisham--a little short of breath--asked to see Madam Gadow. She came up in the most affable frame of mind; nothing could be further from the normal indignation of the British landlady. She was very voluble, gesticulatory and lucid, but unhappily bi-lingual, and at all the crucial points German. Mr. Lewisham's natural politeness restrained him from too close a pursuit across the boundary of the two imperial tongues. Quite half an hour's amicable discussion led at last to a reduction of sixpence, and all parties professed themselves satisfied with this result.

Madam Gadow was quite cool even at the end. Mr. Lewisham was flushed in the face, red-eared, and his hair slightly disordered, but that

sixpence was at any rate an admission of the justice of his claim. "She was evidently trying it on," he said almost apologetically to Ethel. "It was absolutely necessary to present a firm front to her. I doubt if we shall have any trouble again...."

"Of course what she says about kitchen coals is perfectly just."

Then the young couple went for a walk in Kensington Gardens, and--the spring afternoon was so warm and pleasant--sat on two attractive green chairs near the band-stand, for which Lewisham had subsequently to pay twopence. They had what Ethel called a "serious talk." She was really wonderfully sensible, and discussed the situation exhaustively. She was particularly insistent upon the importance of economy in her domestic disbursements and deplored her general ignorance very earnestly. It was decided that Lewisham should get a good elementary text-book of domestic economy for her private study. At home Mrs. Chaffery guided her house by the oracular items of "Inquire Within upon Everything," but Lewisham considered that work unscientific.

Ethel was also of opinion that much might be learnt from the sixpenny ladies' papers--the penny ones had hardly begun in those days. She had bought such publications during seasons of affluence, but chiefly, as she now deplored, with an eye to the trimming of hats and such like vanities. The sooner the typewriter came the better. It occurred to Lewisham with unpleasant suddenness that he had not allowed for the

purchase of a typewriter in his estimate of their resources. It brought their "law" down to twelve or thirteen weeks.

They spent the evening in writing and copying a number of letters, addressing envelopes and enclosing stamps. There were optimistic moments.

"Melbourne's a fine city," said Lewisham, "and we should have a glorious voyage out." He read the application for the Melbourne professorship out loud to her, just to see how it read, and she was greatly impressed by the list of his accomplishments and successes.

"I did not, know you knew half those things," she said, and became depressed at her relative illiteracy. It was natural, after such encouragement, to write to the scholastic agents in a tone of assured consequence.

The advertisement for typewriting in the Athenaeum troubled his conscience a little. After he had copied out his draft with its "Scientific phraseology a speciality," fine and large, he saw the notes she had written out for him. Her handwriting was still round and boyish, even as it had appeared in the Whortley avenue, but her punctuation was confined to the erratic comma and the dash, and there was a disposition to spell the imperfectly legible along the line of least resistance. However, he dismissed that matter with a resolve to read over and correct anything in that way that she might have sent



her to do. It would not be a bad idea, he thought parenthetically, if he himself read up some sound authority on the punctuation of sentences.

They sat at this business quite late, heedless of the examination in botany that came on the morrow. It was very bright and cosy in their little room with their fire burning, the gas lit and the curtains drawn, and the number of applications they had written made them hopeful. She was flushed and enthusiastic, now flitting about the room, now coming close to him and leaning over him to see what he had done. At Lewisham's request she got him the envelopes from the chest of drawers. "You are a help to a chap," said Lewisham, leaning back from the table, "I feel I could do anything for a girl like you--anything."

"Really!" she cried, "Really! Am I really a help?"

Lewisham's face and gesture, were all assent. She gave a little cry of delight, stood for a moment, and then by way of practical demonstration of her unflinching helpfulness, hurried round the table towards him with arms extended, "You dear!" she cried.

Lewisham, partially embraced, pushed his chair back with his disengaged arm, so that she might sit on his knee....

Who could doubt that she was a help?