The Project Gutenberg eBook of True to a Type, Vol. 2 (of 2), by Robert Cleland

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: True to a Type, Vol. 2 (of 2)

Author: Robert Cleland

Release date: July 24, 2012 [EBook #40325]

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Charles Bowen from page scans provided by
Google Books (Oxford University)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK TRUE TO A TYPE, VOL. 2 (OF 2) ***

Transcriber's Notes:

1. Page scan source:

http://books.google.com/books?id=pPYUAAAAQAAJ
(Oxford University)

TRUE TO A TYPE

TRUE TO A TYPE

BY

R. CLELAND

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

MDCCCLXXXVII

All Rights reserved

CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

TRUE TO A TYPE.

CHAPTER XX.

PAUL AND VIRGINIA.

The storm exhausted itself at length. The thunder passed on westward, the rain abated and ceased, the clouds parted and rolled away, leaving the sky clear but paler for its agony of tears. It was now evening, and the air felt fresh even to chilliness, for the temperature had fallen a matter of fifteen degrees--from 90° to 70° or 75°. The party stood round the fire with something not greatly removed from a shiver, and warmed their hands. It was not actually cold, but the transition had been sudden and violent, which came to the same thing.

"And now to get back?" said Wilkie, looking at his watch. "The gong at the beach is just going to sound for supper. I confess I feel peckish. Should we not be thinking of a move, Blount?"

Blount coughed. "There are rather many of us for my small boat, in the present state of the weather. There is probably more wind, and certainly more swell, than you would suppose from looking at the landlocked channel down there. I fear we must postpone thoughts of supper for the present."

"If we delay, no one can say when we may get in. I don't see why we should not make the attempt at once. We shall at least have daylight to lessen our difficulties if we attempt it now. What do you say?"

"I fear it is impossible. What do *you* say, Jake?"

Jake caught a look from his "boss," and understood. "No, sir-ree! you won't reach Lippenstock to-night in that aar boat with a crew of six. It 'ud be more'n a man's life is worth, with the sea as is on in the bay now."

"Suppose we go four, then. I could take charge of the young ladies."

"We won't break up the party, neither Margaret nor I," said Rose. "You might try the voyage with Jake, however, by yourself. You could tell them at the beach to expect us for breakfast."

Wilkie looked doubtfully to Jake; but Jake's eyes were averted. He had pulled out his plug of tobacco, and was intent upon judiciously whittling off the exact quantity for a chew. He had no

idea of making the voyage twice for the accommodation of one man, that man not being the "boss," and one, besides, who did not seem over-likely to remember to tip. Jake's look afforded little encouragement to make a proposal, and that reminded Wilkie in time that the figure he himself would make would not be heroic if he arrived alone at the beach and said that the others were coming. He elevated his eyebrows into the British equivalent of a Frenchman's plaintive shrug, and sighed, and resigned himself to his fate. If he had even had some one to "spoon" with, it would not have been so bad; but after his experience in that hut during the hours of the thunderstorm, he realised that he was in the position of one who at the last moment goes to a place of amusement, and finds every desirable place ticketed "engaged."

"Worse than Robinson Crusoe," he grumbled to himself, "for I've no man Friday."

"Then you would make the rest of us stand for the savages," laughed Blount; "which is scarcely flattering. But keep up your heart, old man; it might be worse. It is warm in here, at any rate--thanks to our absent hosts the fishermen. We must not forget to leave something behind in payment for the use of their wood-heap."

"Why didn't they leave provisions when they were about it? Even a ship-biscuit would be agreeable now."

"And sugar and tea," laughed Margaret. "They might have left some tea--and cups and saucers."

Wilkie objected to being chaffed. He looked severe. "I feel almost faint, I can tell you, Miss Naylor. Brain-workers, I suppose, are more susceptible to physical privation than the generality," and his eye rested on the other two gentlemen, as though they were instances in point. "The brain is a delicate organ, and easily thrown out of gear. It needs frequent nourishment at short intervals, to keep it in good working order."

"You will have to give your brain a rest to-night, then, Mr Wilkie, and husband your fibre, as there is nothing here to renew it with--no larder, even, except the sea down there. I am glad that, being a woman, I have no brain to speak of. The exhaustion of its fibre won't be noticed."

"You've hit it, Margaret!" cried Blount--"without even caring--as you so often do. Smart girl, and don't know it. The sea is our larder, full of fish, and Jake has lines in the boat's locker. Let's go fishing."

"The boat will be wet after the rain," said Rose, "and I have had one wetting already. I shall not go fishing, thanks; but I do not mind looking among the rocks for limpets and mussels, and things. They tell me they are good to eat, when people are very hungry."

"Not a bad thing to do. Whoever likes, can fish from the boat; I shall *shell*-fish on shore," chimed in Margaret.

"To shell-fish is not wisely selfish," retorted Wilkie, with the air of a wag. "How much more comfortable to sit in the boat hauling up your fish, than go pottering and stumbling over slippery rocks with a lapful of rubbish you won't be able to cook after you have got it! while we could broil some fish nicely on the hot coals. Believe me, it's better to be wisely selfish than to bother about worthless shell-fish."

"I don't think I am selfish; but you may end in becoming a punster if you are not warned in time; and to show you are not selfish, you had better go out with Jake, and we will all assist you to cook and eat whatever you may be lucky enough to catch."

Wilkie looked to the other two men, but both were reaching down hats for the girls from lofty pegs where they had been hung. No one heeded him, and he deemed it best to follow Jake, who had already gone down to the boat and was preparing to launch it. If he was condemned to be a supernumerary, it was better to be a useful and independent one afloat, than merely in the way on shore; and he had his reward in a calm and tranquil evening on the water, his self-love unfretted by the view of less learned men preferred to himself, his hand bobbing peacefully with his line, and his head in a cloud of soothing tobacco. Occasionally he would get a bite, and hauled in his fish with the consoling thought that there were some creatures whom he could catch, and that the girls would not object to partake of his fish, however they might disregard himself.

The four remaining in the hut stood by the door and watched the launching of the boat; then they likewise descended to the beach and began to look among the rocks for shell-fish. But either there were few to find, or the seekers were inattentive in their search, for they did not find many, and soon wearying, abandoned even the pretence of being useful.

They wandered idly along in the purple light, now waning swiftly into bluish grey and shadowy indistinctness. Of the wild and lonely scene of half an hour ago, nothing was left but the dusky darkness of the land lifting its solid outline against the tinted sky, where wan transparent gleams of the departing day contended with the darkling blue of night, and the dim sea escaping from the shadows of the islands spread away to the horizon, to bound the low-down glimmer in the southern sky.

The talk had split itself into two separate strands, and the talkers had drifted apart, each

couple following the thread of its own discourse, and oblivious to its divergence from the other. Joseph and Rose were alone again. She was walking by his side, looking with level gaze straight out before, to the distant line where sea and sky, straining to meet each other, were yet parted where they touched, as two who could not be united. She was thinking--or more, perhaps, she was waiting--with head inclining forward and to her companion, while his eyes sought the ground. His footsteps sounded irregular as he walked, as though he were not at ease, but laboured with something to be said, for which the word was difficult to find. He looked up more than once as if about to speak, and then his eyes fell again without his having spoken. She did not observe. Her eyes were on the horizon and the light was dim.

At length he clenched his hands, stopped short, and spoke abruptly. His voice was low, but there was an intensity in the utterance, which made her start although she had been expecting him to speak.

"Rose! will you be my wife?... Why should I try to lead up easily to what I meant to say? I am too much in earnest to be able to coin phrases."

She turned and looked at him. She did not look up shyly, but yet she was not bold. Doubt, if there had been light enough to see, or if his mind had been calm enough to observe, was the prevailing sentiment which her face betrayed. She looked, and her lips grew tense, and then she drew a heavy, deep, slow breath; and, like a sleep-walker obeying an impulse apart from common consciousness or volition, she held out her hand.

He caught it in both of his, and raised it to his lips, and clasped it as if he never would let it go; and the boiling blood went tingling through his veins in a transport of tumultuous joy, which shook his frame and made it vain for him to try to raise his voice.

She thought she heard him whisper, "Rose! My own!" and straight the tears began to gather in her eyes, and her breathing broke into a sob. She thought, she was about to give way, and covered her face with the other hand. And yet there was a stillness in her heart, as though it were some one else--a looker-on--a curious and yet an approving onlooker, but one who felt no joy at her being sought, no hope and no elation, though it bade her accept. And then a despairing pang shot through her. Was it impossible for her to love? But she would! She was resolved to love--to love this man. She had read in him that he loved her well. He was good and true; she more than liked or even respected him. She was resolved to love as fondly and as faithfully as ever woman had, if only to show----but she would not think of that--never again. The past was buried. Let it lie.

Joseph, in his own tumultuous exaltation, felt the trembling of her hand. He heard her sob. He saw her cover her face as if to hide her tears, and caught her in his arms, folding her in, and pressing her to his heart in a tender transport. To dry those tears was now his rightful privilege; and very tenderly and softly did he whisper in her ear, bidding her calm herself and have no fear, for he loved and worshipped her, and would devote his life to shelter her from care or harm.

And now the stars came out upon the night, looking down with friendly understanding eyes, like beings of a higher sphere, approving the troth-plight and bidding them be happy. They sat them down upon a broad flat rock; her hand was nestling in his palm, and her form drawn up against him within his encircling arm; and the silent peace of night, tranquil and still beneath the keeping of the kindly stars, wore in upon their agitated spirits, helping the fever in their blood to cool.

To realise that there is some one in accord, and all our own, who shares desire and hope, our present and our future, to whom the inmost thought might be revealed, if that were possible, without the conventional disguises in which we hide while we converse with one another, is a sensation of the rarest joy, but seldom known, and never known for long. To Joseph, who had lived alone in heart, it was very new and inexpressibly delightful. There were no words to image forth a tithe of what he felt. Speech failed. He held her hand, and breathed the pure delicious night in gasps of satisfaction: and it was all so still and simple; only the outlined rocks against the sky, and glimmering faint reflections of the stars on the dim water; no troubling details or petty objects, no motion but the ceaseless current of the universe, the noiseless unseen marching of the host of heaven from east to west. He and his love were the only two in all the mighty vault. For them the night was still, the air so sweet, the stars so kind and friendly. They and the universe were in company and at one in some mysterious way, and the peace of the universe flowed in upon his soul.

Rose sat in wonder at the intensity of the silence. How this man must love her! It was sweet to be so loved, but it was solemn. She felt small within his clasping arms. Her hand was laid in his, and nestled in the tender warmth of its grasp, so strong and so protecting. He had taken her for his very own, and she felt humble in the unworthiness of the self he set such store on. She felt ashamed at the inward stillness which could respond so coldly; but the feeling roused and warmed her somewhat, and she was glad of it. She had striven to win him. Honestly she had striven, if in a divided spirit, which made her blush now to think of the depth and tenderness of the love which she had won. But at least he should never have ground to suspect half-heartedness. She would compel herself to love him more; and if the reality fell short of what she felt she owed, at least the expression should not fall short in fulness. She crept closer, and strove to thaw away the numbing chill which hung about her heart, and was so stubborn to dispel. He

responded with a tightening clasp against the strong warm throbbing of his breast, till she vibrated with the pulses of his perfect love. She looked out across the sea, and vowed to be more than he had hoped or dreamed, and felt still and strengthened by the peace spread out around her. And so they sat, together, and yet so far apart in feeling; and time went by without their taking heed.

* * * * *

At length--they knew not when or how the idea came into their minds, but probably it was because a star, appearing to have parted from the rest, came down, and seemed to be pursuing an independent course, and to outstrip its fellows, being only, when they looked a little later, the lantern hung out upon a passing ship--they started from their reverie and stood up.

"The dew is falling; you will be chilled." It was Joseph who spoke. "Let me button my coat round your shoulders. It is not thick or warm, but at least it adds another fold of covering."

"Thanks, but I am warm.... No; I do not want it. But you are kind to mean giving it. Only you should not think that I would strip you of your coat. Is it not time that we were turning back?"

"Yes; we have strayed a long way from the hut. The ground is rough, and it is so dark one cannot see where one steps. You will stumble. Give me your hand, and let me lead."

The unevenness of the ground, and the consequent stumbling among rocks and boulders in the uncertain dimness, soon brought them back to the level of everyday life; and when at length, after an hour of floundering and groping, they came in sight of the fire-glow streaming from the fishermen's shelter, they were completely themselves again--gayer even than their wont, in the reaction from the deeper feelings in which they had been lately steeped.

They were the last of the party to come in. The others were already round the fire, assisting with their advice the experienced Jake, who was on his knees broiling fish upon the coals. They made a tolerable supper, without bread or salt, Jake assuring Wilkie that, coming from the sea, fish needed none, and that they would lie the lighter on his "stommick" for lack of fixings. And then the girls were left alone, and the men withdrew to the boat, under whose shelter they contrived to sleep till morning, when they sailed from the desert island, each with some memory or experience to mark it in his recollection for life.

CHAPTER XXI.

IS SHE HERE?

The house was very quiet when Gilbert Roe met Maida and Mrs Denwiddie at breakfast on the morning after his arrival. Only an invalid, one or two old people, some dull ones who had no friends, and a few young children with nurses, were scattered here and there at the deserted tables. He adjusted his eyeglass and looked about. He saw as well as other people; but, like them, he found the glass useful as a demonstration on many occasions.

"I thought," he said, "you told me the house was full. This is the poorest showing I have come on yet for a seaside resort in August. Not by any means a promising crowd to live in--and to-morrow is Sunday. One can't well get away before Monday morning."

"There was not a vacant place yesterday at this hour," Maida answered, a little hurt. "That I can tell you. Can *you* tell, Mrs Denwiddie, what has become of them all?"

"Did you not hear the fuss an hour ago or more? It woke me out of my morning sleep. Such gabble and uproar I never did hear--slamming doors and scuttling feet, everybody speaking at once, enough to wake the dead. And when I got up and looked out, there they were, just starting away in buggies and 'buses and rockaways, the whole lot of boarders it seemed to me, and it just astonishes me to see so many left behind. Jest those that couldn't go, I guess, or didn't care to go, because there was nobody to mind them."

"Where have they gone, then?" asked Maida. "As I went away, so to speak, yesterday, I was taking no interest in the plans; but I am real sorry for Gil----for Mr Roe's sake, that I did not know; and I wonder you did not go with the rest, Mrs Denwiddie."

"So I would, perhaps, if it had not been for promising to breakfast along with you, under the circumstances;" and she looked most knowingly into the other's eyes with her head on one side.

But seeing the humour was not appreciated, she went on--"though I don't know either. I don't much hold with boat-rides, and there'll be sech a crush! Jest think of a boat on the water in Lippenstock Bay a day like this! for it's there they're gone to, and Fessenden's Island, for a picnic. And won't they find they've had enough of their steamboat-ride afore they're done with it! I went last summer, and I know."

"We must resign ourselves to a quiet day on the sands, then," said Maida, with a little sigh which expressed nothing but satisfaction. "Let's go at once, Gilbert, before the heat comes on. There's a nice grove down near the shore, about three miles along, and it'll be just splendid to rest there about noon."

"Three miles, Maidy--and three back! And how am I to go that far in the heat?" exclaimed the widow.

Maida opened her eyes, just a little. It was convenient to have her aged friend--for so she was now for the first time disposed to consider her--sit by her at table, and fend off curious remark; but to have her make a third in her intercourse with Gilbert was more than flesh and blood could be expected to bear. Her lips tightened, and there was a quiver of the nostril suggestive of a sniff; but she took care to make no emendation of her first proposal.

"I think, now," said Mrs Denwiddie, "the best thing Mr Roe can do would be to give us a ride along the sands in one of the landlord's rockaways. He'd find it real smooth and pleasant for conversation." She was indeed loath to part from "these two interestin' young things," as she would have called them now, though twenty-four hours earlier she would certainly have spoken of Maida as a forlorn old maid; so completely will circumstances alter cases. The young man made the difference--the old, old story which is always new. She was too old herself for these sweet passages; but if she could no longer hope to woo or be wooed, it was pleasant to assist at the wooing of some one else. People do not cease to be hungry when they lose their teeth, and a Barmecide banquet is better than no feast at all. Is not this "the long-felt want," to quote the prospectus-writers, which finds readers for the shoal of love-tales published every week?

"I'm going for a smoke," Gilbert observed, after an interval in which the play of knife and fork had absorbed their undivided attention; and marshalling his companions out of the dining-room, he withdrew to the male lounging-ground of the establishment. There he found the "proprietor" and his clerk, each with a newspaper and a toothpick, arranging themselves on three chairs apiece to ruminate on the breakfast they had eaten, and to anticipate the meal which was to come next. The day was *dies non* with them, their customers being away at the picnic, and they were promising themselves a morning of complete repose. Gilbert's appearance was not particularly welcome; however, they both favoured him with an inclination of the head, the proprietor combining his with a flourish of his toothpick towards the regiment of empty chairs, by way of inviting him to take a few and make himself at home.

He condescended to accept one of Gilbert's cigars; and finding it good, he relaxed so far as to vouchsafe a reference from the paper he was still reading, with regard to the state of politics in "Bhoston,"--to which Gilbert replied, alluding in passing to affairs in the West. Thereupon the proprietor woke up sufficiently to put one of his feet to the ground, and proceeded to interrogate him as to where was his home, what was his occupation, why was he travelling in the East, &c. Having received all the particulars which his guest seemed disposed to communicate, his interest subsided again, his leg resumed the horizontal position, his eyes returned to his paper, and his answers to Gilbert's efforts to converse became so brief and indifferent that the latter gave it up, and pored over his own newspaper in silence. The captain of a ship may be an important person on his own deck, but his grandeur is nothing to that of a hotel proprietor when his house is full. He is so accustomed to be spoken fair by guests desiring improved accommodation and eccentric et-ceteras, that he stiffens into an autocrat of the severest type.

Gilbert smoked, and read till he grew tired of it, and then he got up and sauntered away. He was becoming a bore unto himself, and longed for other company. On the gallery near the entrance he espied Maida hatted and gloved, awaiting an invitation to walk. She was alone; he had only to signify his wish, and away they strolled along the sands. It was not unpleasant, he found, now that the restlessness of his spirit had been chastened by the proprietor's severe neglect, to be looked up to, made of, and courted. His weed became more fragrant in the freshness of the air and sunshine as they wandered along by the water's-edge. Maida's low eager tones mingled agreeably with the babble of the breakers coming on, curling and retreating respectfully within some inches of his feet, and made him realise once more that he was lord of the creation, and a very fine fellow indeed.

Maida's flow of conversation trickled on without intermission. It was wonderful, indeed, how she found so much to say; but the well of happy feeling within yielded a steady flow of purling talk, not deep, perhaps, but clear and cheerful, with opportunities for him to answer if so it pleased him, yet able to babble along pleasantly if he said nothing. She did not talk about herself, which might have grown tedious, nor did she trouble him with questions about his own career. He must tell her of that, she thought, when he chose, though she longed to know. Her thoughts were back in the time when she used to know him, and her talk was reminiscences, touched with the ideal brightness which the days of our youth never assume till after they are fled.

Gilbert listened, remembering enough to verify her words; but yet it seemed most different, as

she described it, from what he had supposed. It was like being told about some one else, especially when she recalled their conversations in those ancient days. To think that he, a weather-beaten worldling, shrewd, clear-headed, and cool, could ever have been given up to fancies and enthusiasms such as she spoke of--such as she seemed to cling to still! There had been no changes of circumstance and position with her, to show things in new lights and under new aspects; and so she had continued to serve the old gods. They had flown away from him long ago, as birds escape from their nesting-places when the sun is up. He knew them no more, immersed as he was in the hurry of workaday life, and it seemed strange to have them brought before him now. They were pretty and curious, but oh, so narrow and mistaken! A moth may feel as he did, when, shown the chrysalis out of which it crept, it realises how impossible it would be for it to fold and compress itself again within the old limits.

For one morning, the sensation of being made love to by Maida, and being courted under the form of his older self, was distinctly pleasurable, though mild. She thought all the world of him--that he could see--and he would be kind to her by way of making some small return, especially in the absence of any one else to amuse him. After their early dinner, the house being still in its deserted condition, he brought her into the billiard-room to teach her the game. It was her first lesson, and she was eager to learn; but she could not do so quickly enough to play with him that day, however many points he might give her--so he tired of that, and then, being still in a gracious mood, he remembered Mrs Denwiddie's suggestion of the morning, that he should give them a drive, and he fulfilled her desire. Both ladies enjoyed it immensely; and to crown their triumph, they found that the picnickers had returned only a minute before them, and had the gratification of alighting in state with their escort, in full view of the whole houseful of guests.

The thunderstorm which had reached Fessenden's Island an hour before, came on shortly after; wherefore the remainder of the evening was spent within doors, in the usual way, save that the company were more disposed to sit still after their long day in the open air. Music, singing, and conversation were the occupations at first; but the quicksilver in Lucy Naylor and one or two more prevailed at last, and by the time it grew dark the dance was in full force as on other evenings.

"Now!" said Maida to Gilbert. "Are there enough people for your idea of being sociable, now? You are always the same old man, as fond of company as ever. Do you remember the country-dances and cotillions at Deacon Benson's? How we used to keep it up! And the walking home afterwards in the early morning--with the grass running dew, and taking the starch out of my flounces! But you don't remember that, I guess. Ah, those parties! They were just too sweet to last. I have never been at any, since, I cared so much for.... Do you know the cotillion now as well as you used to? My! how you did know it! We girls were always wishing to have you call the figures. Nobody could ever guess what you were going to make us do next. It kept up the interest, and was real exciting. When we'd expect to have 'ladies' chain,' it would be 'set to partners,' or 'ladies in the centre,' or 'first gentleman to the right,' or something quite unexpected. They don't dance cotillions here. I guess it's because they don't know how; though they pretend it's because they've gone out, and the upper circles don't dance them. It's all round-dancing here, except when it's lancers; and then they don't call the figures, so I never know what to do next."

"Well, this is a round-dance. Come! No use sitting here the whole night."

"I'll try," said Maida, delighted to be taken out, but with a misgiving. She did not dance often, and she felt doubtful whether she would acquit herself to the satisfaction of her hero. "Not too fast, please--not any faster than you can help. The waltz is apt to make me giddy," she ejaculated as they started off; but then she was in rapture, and said nothing more. Were not his arms around her? and was it not he whom she held and clung to as the room began to swim, and her sense of terra firma to grow vague and indistinct?

"Don't hang on quite so altogetherly, Maida. And if you could keep your feet to the ground, it would *look* better, you know. You're more hefty, as we used to say, than when you were a baby," Gilbert observed, as they swung and revolved laboriously round the room; but at length he got out of breath, and they had to stop.

"Oh!" sighed Maida, with closed eyes, clinging to her partner for support because she was giddy, and also, perhaps, because she liked to do it. "I am quite run out! But it was lovely."

"Come and sit down then, and rest," said the matter-of-fact Gilbert, "and get back your breath;" which was not just the form of answer which Maida had looked for. However, the music was ending and it could not be helped.

And now Gilbert, having done his duty by his old friend, thought it was time for her to be of some little service to him in return. He asked her to introduce him to some of the other young ladies whom he might ask to dance; and she could not but consent. It seemed a strange request to make, she thought, a strange desire to feel, when she was by--so soon after returning from so long an absence! It was a masculine caprice, she supposed. And those men! Who could understand them? She could take care, however, that the ladies she presented him to were not more than moderately endowed with beauty. And she did. One cannot be expected to court misfortune--to introduce rivals to even the most loyal of swains--to fetch a stick from the wood to break one's own back with. Perhaps she rather overdid it, in fact; at least Gilbert did not invite

many of her beauties to dance, and when the introductions were over he could not help saying, "What a homely lot of friends you have, Maida! They must be awful good, if appearances are as deceitful as folks say. Now there's a little girl over yonder, a peart little filly, that it would be a real pleasure to dance with. What's her name? Can you not introduce me there?"

"I don't know her. She's a stuck-up little thing; and if I'm any judge of girls, as I ought to be, there's not much in her. I hear them call her Fanny Payson, and she belongs to Senator Deane's party--Deane of Indiana, you know."

"I knew Deane well; he lives part of the time in Chicago. Is his family with him?"

"Oh yes; but they put on airs, no end of. We poor New Hampshire folks ain't good enough for them to know."

Gilbert was not listening now. He had fallen into a brown study, and presently without any explanation he left her. He wandered up and down the rooms, wearing a look of impatient eagerness, and peering into faces as though in search of some one. At length he darted forward to the side of a lady standing up to dance. "Miss Deane," he whispered hoarsely, "is she here?"

Lettice turned. "You, Mr Roe?" Then, recovering from her surprise, she assumed a manner of great coldness, and opening her eyes, as if in wonder at his audacious intrusion, she limited her answer to a clearly articulated "No."

"Where is she? Pray tell! I----"

He had stretched out his hand as if to lay hold on her skirt to detain her; but with a motion of her hand she swept it beyond his reach, saying severely, "I cannot tell you;" and then, in turning away, she added, "Do not expose yourself in this public place;" and giving her hand to her partner, she was whirled away among the dancers.

Gilbert set his teeth, and a look of despairing woe passed across his features. He traversed the crowded rooms once more, and then, too miserable to remain, he went out upon the dripping galleries, where darkness and the cooled and moistened air yielded a kind of consolation. There he paced and smoked, till life grew bearable again, though still ungenial, and then he went to his room and turned in.

Maida sat where he had left her on the brink of the dance, and grew very sad when he did not return to her side. What had she done to offend or weary him? But at least he was not dancing--that was something. Yet where could he be? A heaviness came over her spirits, and she felt depressed for the first time in the last four-and-twenty hours.

CHAPTER XXII.

"WELL, PETER?"

Next day was Sunday. Compared with other days at Clam Beach, it was the same with a difference--leisure combined with fresh air, but partaken of in a different form. Church was the recognised occupation; but the churches were at Blue Fish Creek, four miles away, down the coast in the other direction from Lippenstock. Omnibuses were in use to convey the inmates, and everybody went, even the old people, the dull ones, the invalid, and the young children. It was the only outing which the dull people allowed themselves; there was nothing to pay for the carriage exercise, and they never missed it.

Mrs Naylor and Mrs Wilkie remained at home. They had had enough of driving the day before, and found it agreeable now to sit still in the deserted gallery, and absorb sunshine and fresh air in peace. At least such was the state of Mrs Naylor's feelings. Not being a British mother, she had considerable confidence in her daughter's ability to take care of herself, so long, at least, as that pernicious young man Walter Blount was away, and she had no ground to suspect his presence on Fessenden's Island. Besides, she was aware now that the girl's uncle had also been left behind, therefore she was safe, not to mention Peter Wilkie, whose mother had been making herself ridiculous on the subject all the previous evening. There was nothing very compromising in the situation, so far as she could see; in fact, with her desire to suppress the girl's kindness for Blount, she could almost have wished there had been. It would have brought the other young man up to the point of committing himself, and, with a little maternal pressure, compelled her to accept him; and as she had quite made up her mind that Margaret was to marry in Toronto, that pressure would assuredly be forthcoming.

Mrs Wilkie's motherly feelings were in a state of ebullition which would not let her sit still. She would get up from her chair and pace the gallery with irregular steps, puffing and sighing distractedly, get tired and plump down again, pressing her hands together, and sighing worse than before. Her boy was done for--bagged by a designing girl. Speculatively and in the abstract, she was wont to express a strong desire to see him married, whatever she may have felt; but the ideal spouse had never yet appeared--or rather, whenever there seemed a possibility of any fair one finding favour in his eyes, she began to see objections, even if she had herself recommended the girl and fancied that she would like him to marry her. Speculatively, she had held Margaret Naylor in the highest esteem; actually, she found herself detesting her with all her might. She had struck up quite a friendship with her mother, and the fellow-boarders had differed only as to which of the mothers was most desirous of being allied to the other. Now, alas! her son's fate seemed to be decided. She must resign the first place in his care, and had her supplanter been a seraph with wings come straight down from heaven, she could not have accepted her without a spasm of jealousy.

"Cast upon a desert island," she muttered to herself, as she paced the gallery. "A second Robinson Crusoe, with his man Friday. But it's not a man Friday! It's worse; it's a girl Friday!--or rather, it's worse than any Friday at all--it's the parrot! A gabbin', chatterin', useless thing--all tongue and feathers, and not wan grain of sense in its head. An empty, feckless, dressed-up doll, with nothing but the face and the clothes to recommend her. How can men of intelleck be such fools? And after all, it isn't much of a face even. I've seen----" but here the soliloquy grew inaudible; only, judging by the toss of her head, which set the little grey curls on her temples a-dancing, it must have been what she had seen in her own mirror long ago which was so much more admirable.

She dropped into a chair near her companion, panting, and fanned herself vehemently, complaining of the heat. It seemed to make her hotter still to sit beside Mrs Naylor, in her present frame of mind.

"Try to sit still, dear Mrs Wilkie. You will find it the best way to get cool," Mrs Naylor said, very sweetly. "He will be sure to be home very soon. My brother-in-law is with them, you know; and between two gentlemen, they will be sure to contrive some means of getting away."

Mrs Wilkie snorted, and fanned herself more vehemently than before, relapsing into her late mutterings about Robinson Crusoe and the desert island; but, disturbed as she was, she had presence of mind enough to suppress the parrot, and complained of the heat and her palpitations instead.

Mrs Naylor grew positively nervous, and even began to feel an anticipatory pity for her daughter, in the prospect of so tumultuous a mother-in-law--when, quite unexpectedly, the truants drove up to the door.

"Peter, you rascal!" his mother exclaimed, jumping up and running down-stairs to meet him. "You've nearly been the death of me;" and, to demonstrate how much she had suffered, so soon as she came within range of his supporting arms, she pressed both hands upon her "palpitation," crying, "Oh!" and made as if she would fall.

Peter caught her as intended, and supported her up to her room, not soothing her, by any means, but scolding her roundly, in good set terms; but then he had known her for many years, and understood her idiosyncrasies. Doubtless his system was the right one. Soothing would only have encouraged her to rave and do the scolding herself, till her palpitations came on in earnest. He was an excellent son, whatever his shortcomings in other respects might be; and there are constitutions which require what their medical advisers might call "bracing treatment," just as others agree with bland and soothing remedies.

"Well, Peter?" she asked, with impatient eagerness, so soon as they were closeted together, in complete forgetfulness of the scene which she had been enacting the minute before--forgetting her incipient faintness, and likewise the rough restoratives which had been applied. "Have ye done it?"

"Done what, mother?"

"You know very well what I mean. Have ye promised to marry that girl down-stairs?"

"I have not."

She heaved a great sigh of relief; but she went on with her catechism. "How's that? I never saw ye more taken up with anybody. Ye stuck to her like a burr the livelong day; and many were the envious glances I saw some others casting after you two, as ye went dandering over the hills like a pair of lovers. I was sure ye were nabbet--just grippet and done for like a wired rabbit; and, says I to myself, there's wan of the simple wans that love simplicity, and she's just inveigled him into makin' her an offer."

"She doesn't want to inveigle me. She is provided already. She did not give me the chance to make a fool of myself, like your young friend in the Proverbs, whom you are so fond of talking about. She availed herself of my escort to bring her to a man she liked better than me; that was all."

"The besom! She took her use out of ye, and let ye slide? Do ye mean to tell me that, Peter Wilkie? And are ye going to stand it? Have ye nothing more to say than just stand like a gowk and own til it? Have ye no spurrit left?"

"Whisht, mother! and don't haver."

"Whisht yourself! Do ye think I'm going to sit still and see a monkey like that scancing at my son? She'd have the assurance, would she, to take her use out of my boy, and throw him away when she was done, like a socket gooseberry! My certie, but she'll rue it yet!"

"She did nothing, mother. The girl is engaged, though we did not know it. You would not have me cut in and break up an engagement?"

"Ye might, if ye liked. Your poseetion would justifee you, and the girl would be the gainer."

"But I wouldn't, mother, if she was fond of some one else."

"And who's the young man?"

"You don't know him. He is a Mr Blount, who was staying here last week, but he went away."

"I never saw him, and ye know I have been a great deal with the girl's mother. I'm thinking the attachment has not gone far, or I would have seen him hanging about Mrs Naylor."

"I do not think Mrs Naylor likes him, and that was why he came to the island to meet her quietly."

"Illeecitly? It'll be an illeecit amoor!"

"Whisht, mother! and don't speak French. You are taking away the girl's character without knowing it."

"She deserves it, and more. To trifle with a Deputy Minister, and have a sweetheart without telling her mother! I never heard the like. Ye're well quit o' her, Peter."

"I never had her. She would not look at me."

"Set her up! But it will be my duty to say a quiet word to Mrs Naylor, and enlighten her about her daughter's ongoings. It'll be good for the hizzy, and a warning to her not to make use of gentlemen of poseetion to serve her underhand ends."

"You won't, mother. It is no concern of yours. We know nothing about the Naylors' affairs. Let them settle their own hash."

"I cannot but let a mother know about her daughter's ongoings. And oh, but she's fond of her! It will stab her to the heart. But it may be blessed to herself, for she's inclined to be rather high sometimes. It's time she was learning a little humeelity."

"If you do, you'll disgrace me. People will say it was because she would not look at me that I went and betrayed the girl's meeting her lover, out of pure spite. Her uncle was there, besides, so it is no concern of ours. And again, I do not want her."

"Of course not. But to think she would go walking away with you before everybody, and laughing at you in her sleeve, to keep tryst with another man! My blood just biles to think of it. I'd like to nip her ears for her. But see if I don't give her a bit of my mind ere all's done."

"If you do, mother----"

"Now, don't be clenchin' your fists at me, you unnatural boy. Just your father over again. And a dour, cantankerous, wrongheaded gowk he always was. He'd go out in the world and let them just trample on him, and then he'd come home to his poor sufferin' wife, and play the roaring lion. But he'd play another tune now, I warrant, if he could get me back again. He'd be glad enough to have me, now he has to do without me. And so with you, Peter, when you see me laid out stiff in my coffin, ye'll be wishin' ye had used me better. Ah, my bonny man, ye'll be wishin', when it's too late, ye had behaved different to your fond old mother!" which was pathetic, and caused the speaker to wipe her eyes. The effect on her son was different.

"I wish you would let the old man alone," he said. "It would sound better. Nobody knows anything about him here, and need not, if you will but hold your tongue. Some day you will forget yourself; there will be a washing of our family linen held in public, and nobody will think the more of either you or me. As for the young lady, unless you will promise to say nothing either to her or her mother, we pack up everything tonight, and back we go to Canada to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"POOR SUSAN!"

The subject of the foregoing discussion stole quickly and quietly up to her room, unconscious of the angry passions she had unwittingly aroused, intending to remain there till the people returned from church, when she would meet her mother surrounded by strangers, and so avoid the bad quarter of an hour which her conscience told her she ought to expect. She had scarcely removed her hat, however, when the door opened and her mother appeared, wearing a smile in which curious impatience mingled with complacent certainty. The worthy lady had very little doubt as to what she was going to be told, and was already congratulating herself on her good management and good luck combined.

"Good morning, mamma. How anxious you must have been! Did you think I was lost? But, to be sure, uncle Joseph's being in the same predicament would keep your mind at ease."

Margaret had run forward to embrace her mother effusively, and was speaking with unusual vivacity. There was so much to tell and so much to leave untold, without hesitancy, which might betray that aught was being kept back. She did not know how she was to manage, and like other timid things when they find there is no escape, she rushed at the danger as if she could encounter and overbear it. Anything seemed preferable to expectancy, cowering and waiting to be fallen upon and devoured.

Her mother submitted to be kissed. It was the morning routine-observance between her and her girls, but she had not patience for prolonged embraces on the present occasion.

"Tell me," she said, as soon as she could free herself from the importunate endearments; "has he proposed?"

"I almost think he has, to judge from his manner; and he looks so happy."

"You think? You do not know? Come, that is too ridiculous! What did he say?"

"I do not know what he said."

"You don't? And you call yourself a grown-up girl?... That I should be mother to such an *ingénue*!... You must be a fool!"

"You do not imagine he would propose in open meeting, do you? I only infer from her affectionateness to me when we were alone together last night.... We slept in a fisherman's hut.... But she did not exactly tell me anything.... And then he was so awfully attentive to her this morning; ... and they seemed to understand each other so perfectly, although both were rather quiet, and not particularly good company for the rest of us."

"Margaret Naylor! Am I to believe my ears? Do you mean to say you have let that Hillyard girl cut you out?... You grown-up baby! When I was your age, no girl should have done that to me--whether I wanted the man or not. It's a disgrace to your womanhood, and your upbringing--that means me--and your looks, and your spirit--if you had any; but you have none, or you would not have allowed it. The way that man stuck to you yesterday, and trotted away with you on that blessed island!... And you to let another woman cut in and take him away from you!... And people call you a clever girl! Hm!"

"But what was I to do, mother? I could not go in for him myself. I could not make him propose to me."

"Why not, pray? Is he not good enough for you? What do you expect? Is it a President of the United States you hope to captivate?"

"I do not understand. He could not have been persuaded to do anything so dreadful. And you, I am sure, whatever the surprise of this may have stupefied you into saying, you would not have me want to be my own aunt?"

"What do you mean? Whom are you talking about?"

"Uncle Joseph, to be sure. Whom else?"

"Joseph? You must be dreaming."

"I really think, however, he has proposed to Rose Hillyard, and been accepted."

"Impossible! Joseph marry! I never heard anything so preposterous."

"Nevertheless, you will see now. I am sure he is in love I do not think he spoke twice to me all the time we were upon the island--only to Rose, and once or twice, when it was necessary, to Wa--W--to Mr Wilkie, I ought to say."

Margaret started and grew pale as she spoke, but her mother was too intent upon the idea of Joseph's entanglement to observe the stumble.

"My dear, he was blighted some years before you were born. There was a time when I would have laughed at the notion of a blighted man. It seemed one only fit to exist in a novel. Even the novels, some of them, used to make fun of a blighted being. There was 'Mr Toots,' I remember. But in the case of your uncle Joseph, the thing positively occurred. His affections got a wrench some time very long ago,--I never heard the particulars,--and he has never got over it to this day. He might have had any woman in the country for the asking, any time these twenty years--till lately, at least, when he began to grow stout and grey, and, one would have thought, had given up all idea of that sort of thing. There never was as good and soft-hearted a fellow as Joseph, I do believe. You don't catch many of his fellow-men playing such games of constancy, I promise you. His heart must have been shattered. So different from other men's hearts, my dear, as you'll find out! They seem generally to be made of india-rubber--able to swell or contract any quantity, but there's no break in them. You may jump on them, if they will let you; but you will not crush or bruise them. Joseph is the exception to a universal rule--the best brother-in-law and friend that ever lived. But you will not persuade me that he would ask any one to marry him, after the dozen or more fine women I have seen throw themselves at his head; and he never knew it, I do believe. The idea of Joseph becoming entangled! There's no constancy in man, if it turns out that *he* has succumbed to a woman's wiles. If what men call their heart has begun to sprout again with him, it is an unbreakable article for sure.... But I will not believe it: it would spoil my ideal of a perfect love."

"Have you not noticed, mamma, how much he and Rose have been together?"

"Now you speak of it, he has certainly taken most unusual notice of her--for him, that is. But think of the disparity in age!"

"She saved him from drowning, remember."

"That is enough to account for their striking up a fast friendship. But *she* is no forlorn damsel, and no pauper, evidently. She may choose where she likes. Why should she take up with a man old enough to be her father?"

"I do not think anybody need look on Uncle Joseph as old. There are very few young fellows to compare with him for activity or strength, or niceness every way. And he is so well off, besides."

"That maybe it. Poor Joseph! To be saved from the sea only to fall into the hands of a designing fortune-hunter! But I hope you are mistaken. It would be too sad; it would be dreadful! And you and Lucy, my poor children, what a difference it will make in your prospects! You will have to stand on your merits now, if this should chance to be true. No longer the heiresses of wealthy Joseph Naylor!"

"That is no reason why Uncle Joseph should not marry. We have lived very comfortably on what papa left us."

"You do not understand yet. Wait till you go to Ottawa or Toronto. You will recognise the difference then."

"I do not want to stand on anybody's merits but my own. I think I shall be fond of Rose, after the first queerness of her being Uncle Joseph's wife wears off."

"You think so because you do not know the world. I know it, and I can tell you you are wrong.... If once that woman is married to your uncle, there will be no standing her.... And I won't!" And Mrs Naylor, flushing an angry red, turned and left the room. The impending danger to her own consequence had driven every other idea from her mind, and she went without one word upon the subject she had come to discuss--to wit, Peter Wilkie's attentions to her daughter, and how they had been received.

On the stair she met Joseph coming up as she went down. It required an effort to pull herself together and meet him as usual, but she succeeded; or perhaps he was too preoccupied to observe the constraint of her manner as she wished him good-morning and proceeded on her way. He turned in his course, and followed her into a parlour, empty like the other rooms at that hour, owing to the absence of every one at church.

She sat down in a large chair before the open window, with the shady gallery outside, and the fanning breeze blowing in from off the sea. He drew up the nearest seat and placed himself beside her, looking at his nails the while, but saying nothing.

She watched him from under her eyelids. It was true, then, she feared, what Margaret had been telling her, and it made her feel so angry and vindictive that she would not even help him out of the difficulty of breaking his news, by beginning the conversation. He sat, and she sat, but they did not speak. Those nails of his must have had uncommon attractions, or his thoughts had

wandered away into pleasant fields, and he had forgotten that speech was expected of him.

She shuffled her feet beneath her gown and waited, growing more and more impatient. The front of her dress was agitated by the drumming of her slipper-toes, which would not keep still, yet proved an inadequate vent for the impatience which devoured her. It grew intolerable, at last, to have him beaming there upon his own finger-tips, and saying never a word. A red spot came in either cheek; and steadying her voice with a little cough into an uncertain tone, ready alike to grow plaintive or indignant as occasion should arise, she spoke at last--

"How did you contrive to be left behind yesterday?"

He started. His thoughts came back from their wool-gathering with a leap. "Very simply. We stayed too long, I suppose, on the other side of the island. Then the storm came on, and we took shelter in a fisherman's hut. We sent a man to bid the steamer people wait. When he reached the landing the steamer was gone."

"That must have been hours after we left. We got home before the storm overtook us."

"You travelled faster than the storm, then. It was quite early, I should say, when it came on us; though I cannot name the hour, having forgot my watch."

"Had nobody a watch? There were four of you."

"I do not know. The fact is, I was interested in other things."

"Such as--for instance----"

"Well, I was---- But really, Susan, I cannot speak of it in this cold-blooded way. The truth is, I--I have asked Rose Hillyard to marry me."

Mrs Naylor sat bolt-upright in her chair, and turned to look at him, with the red spot burning in either cheek. She lifted her hands, but whether she intended to clasp them or to do something else, was not apparent. His unabashed assurance seemed to petrify her, for though her lips were parted she did not speak.

"And she has been so kind as to say yes.... Wish me joy, dear Susan, of my happiness. It is more than I can believe to be possible." Before she could protest, he had taken her hands in his and shaken them, and was imprinting a kiss upon the flushed place on her cheek.

"Let go, Joseph! You will suffocate me. This is more than---- This is something---- You must be out of your senses."

"Very nearly, Susan. I am the happiest man alive!"

"She is not half your age."

"She is twenty-five."

"And you are forty-seven. May and December! How can you possibly get on together?"

"Where love is, Susan, what else matters?"

"At your age, Joseph, you should have more sense than yield to such raptures. You must know you are talking nonsense."

"Come! you know better than that. It is your commonplace worldliness that is nonsense; and you know it. You were once a bride yourself."

"I was young then, Joseph. We get sense--or we should--as we grow older."

"Rose is young. Why may she not have fresh true feeling, just as you had yourself?"

"But has she? Does she go into raptures as you do, I wonder?"

"One would not like a girl to display her feelings too openly before marriage. You would call it boldness."

"Has she any feeling to display? Can we expect her to have that kind of feeling for a man who might be her father?"

"My dear Susan, time will show. I bring love to the union enough for both, and it will be strange if I do not make her happy. If you knew the story of my youth--which you do not, and it is not needful that you should--but you have known my later life; how I have been alone while others have been making themselves tender ties and households. Do you think it can be anything but dreary to feel that you have no one to call your own--that you can shelter your whole family under your hat-brim?"

"What of your nieces? What of poor Caleb's children?"

"You know I am fond of them, Susan. I do not think you will accuse me of being a neglectful uncle or brother-in-law."

"And yet you are going to cast us off, and put this stranger in our places."

"Not in your places. Why should it make any difference between us? The girls like her."

"That only shows their innocence and ignorance of the world, poor things."

"I do not see it, Susan. If it is their prospects you mean, they are independent already; but you may rest assured they will both come in for a slice, when my belongings come to be divided."

"There! It only wanted that!" cried the sister-in-law, seizing the opportunity to let off steam in a burst of indignation. "It only wanted insult to heap upon the injury. You must fling your testamentary intentions in my teeth, as if I were a mercenary person, in case I should not feel crushed and humbled sufficiently under your latest whim! Have I failed to keep up the family respectability and position as I should? I am growing too old, I suppose, to be the Mrs Naylor of Jones's Landing. Somebody younger must be found to lord it over the people, and turn their heads with follies and expensive notions they cannot afford; and I am to be the neglected dowager living in retirement with my fatherless girls.... But she shall never have it all her own way, Joseph Naylor, if *I* can help it; and if she has, it will be still worse for *you!*" And so saying, Susan got up and flung out of the room, retiring to her chamber, where a full hour elapsed before her heat subsided, and she was able to see how foolish and unreasonable, not to say imprudent, she had been.

Joseph, as was natural, saw it at once, but he was too happy to be easily annoyed. He rose as she did, stepped out on the gallery, and so away, merely whispering to himself, half aloud--

"Poor Susan! It must be a disappointment, and hard to bear. But she is not half as bad and worldly as she pretends. She will be ashamed and sorry enough when next we meet. My cue is to forget this little tantrum altogether."

CHAPTER XXIV.

"THEY MET, 'TWAS IN A CROWD."

It was long before Gilbert Roe could go to sleep, and the occupants of adjoining chambers had abundant opportunity to sympathise with him. He could not rest peacefully in his bed, and was driven to get up and pace his room after his neighbours had retired. He thought he would smoke, but could not find a light, so groped his way down passages and staircases, where only a lamp was left burning here and there, stumbling over boots at bedroom-doors, and arousing echoes in the slumbering house, to ask for matches from the night-watchman. Returned to his room he could not sit and smoke, but must go out upon the gallery, marching up and down through the night-watches, till every sleeper lay awake counting his footfalls and wishing him a cripple. Towards morning he succeeded in growing drowsy, and turned in, and this time slept till it was late. Maida joined him at the breakfast-table, wishing him good morning with an easy intimacy of proprietorship, which provoked him for some reason which did not appear. However, her company was a relief after the weary solitude of his midnight vigil, and in spite of himself he relaxed and grew sociable.

"Come to church, Gilbert?" she said, when breakfast was over; and he, having nothing better to do, consented. They walked leisurely along the sands, as did also a good many of the younger company, who objected to being mewed up in an omnibus.

"Let us step out a little," said Gilbert, "and join those folks in front."

"It is too warm for stepping out much," she answered. "We have a long walk before us. If we hurry we will be flushed and crumpled, and not fit to be seen, when we go into church. And it is a close little place at the best."

"Never mind. We can stop outside when we get there; but let's be cheerful in the meantime. I see Miss Deane in that crowd on in front. Come, let's join them."

"Oh yes! and that little Fanny Payson you were so set on dancing with last night," Maida answered, a little crossly. "You'll have to take to surf-bathing if you want to get in with that crowd. I think them real frivolous, myself, and mighty conceited and stuck-up. My father might

have been a senator too, by now, if he had lived. He ran for Congress the year I was born; and if he did not get sent there, it was none of his fault."

"Never mind, Maida; you may go to Congress yourself yet, when the woman's suffrage law passes. But you must take to wearing glasses"--she had dropped using her goggles, I must observe, since Gilbert's appearance--"to show that you have intellect. Intellect, short-sight, and high culture, all run together, like a three-abreast Russian team. If it wasn't for their short-sightedness they would drop the high culture altogether, for they would see it don't pay in this country. We have only a few professors and scientists all told, you see. Three or four dozen women could marry them all, and the rest of the men don't care to be kept humble all the time, by living with wives who know more than themselves. That's why so many spectacled women go lecturing. It's because nobody wants to marry them."

"To hear you talk, Gilbert, one would say you were just dreadful. You do not really mean, I'm sure, that you believe a woman makes a better wife for being ignorant or a fool. What companionship can there be between an intelligent man and an empty-headed doll? And perhaps you are not aware, but it is a fact, that the most successful female lecturers are married women; and very poorly off their families and invalid husbands would be, if they could not earn money that way."

"Maybe, Maida; I do not know from personal knowledge. I do not attend many lectures, and I never heard a female lecture in my life; but if you think the average man don't like what you call a doll--which, I suppose, means a nice, soft, pretty little thing, who believes she is not clever, and lets other women trample on her, as regards science and things--you never were more mistaken in your life. Lots of smart men find them the best company in the world; and--well--I know for a fact that a woman may be no end of smart, and the very best of company, though she don't read poetry, and knows nothing about the 'ologies.'"

"Natural intelligence, you mean, without any advantages of education. To be sure, you find that in many a farmhouse--the kind of woman who scrapes and saves to send all her sons to college, and sees one of them elected President of the United States, and has her likeness in all the illustrated papers. But if she had had culture, think what such a woman would have become!"

"She would have become a female lecturer. The men would have been afraid of her. She would never have been married, never had a son, and never got her likeness into the magazines as mother of a President. When men marry, they hope, at least, to be boss at home: and few have the conceit to tackle a female steam-engine, expecting to be able to break her in to quiet paces."

"But in cities you want culture to keep up your place in the community. A poorly educated woman must be a drag on her husband's social advancement."

"Not a bit of it. Our first families in Chicago and elsewhere, in this country, and in every other, are noways remarkable for culture. Sometimes it's money raises them, sometimes it's because their fathers were of first families before them, or their friends. Culture may help now and then--it's a distinction in its way, just like beauty or talent; but there must be money, you bet! You country folks talk a heap of nonsense about the help culture is, to rising in the world; so do the newspapers, though they should know better. They think they have it themselves, you see, so they crack it up for their own sakes."

"Oh, Gilbert! I am sorry to hear you speak like that. You used to think very differently."

"Because I did not know any better, and I believed what I read in print. We're not a highly cultured lot in the cities, I can tell you--we successful folks, I mean. How could we be? It takes all we can do to keep ourselves ahead of our neighbours. If we were to divide ourselves between business and politics, or business and culture, we would have to take a back seat in the community. It is not so much special talent that is wanted, for getting on, as entireness. A man must pour his whole self into the one groove, if he is to make a hit. The whole of a very ordinary fellow is more, you see, and therefore surer to win, than part of one of your superior people dabbling in half-a-dozen different pursuits. Remember that, when you come to many, Maida; and if you want to stand high, choose a man of one idea, and that one his business."

"I know better than that, Gilbert," Maida answered, looking up in his eyes with a fond but rather watery smile. She felt wounded by the advice, but she took comfort, in that he was by her side while he spoke, and could not mean it. It was only a man's thoughtless speech--his rough way of being playful. For had he not kept faithful through ten long years--long after she herself had ceased to expect or hope? Had he not come back to her? and was not his presence the strongest refutation of his worldly and cynical words?

And now, having gained, unconsciously to Maida, upon the party whose appearance had started their discussion, she found they were abreast. Gilbert drew towards them, leaving her somewhat apart, as if he would join them.

"Good morning, Miss Deane," he said to Lettice, who was next him.

"Good morning, Mr Roe," she answered very coldly, passing behind Walter Petty immediately after, and becoming engrossed in conversation with Lucy Naylor, who walked on his other side.

Gilbert bit his lip, and Maida could not forbear a smile, to see with the corner of her eye--for she would not turn her head--his chilling reception by those he had been so eager to overtake, as if in preference to her own company. They were all in close discussion now, and completely ignored his presence. The distance widened between him and them, while Maida walked straight forward; and not being minded to walk alone, he was compelled, with something of a crestfallen air, to return to her side.

Maida was not ill-natured. She betrayed no sign of having perceived his discomfiture, and exerted herself to talk in a livelier way than her wont, till he should recover from his mortification. She felt that she was generous in doing this, and the neglect of the others seemed to bind him to her by a rivet the more; so that her spirits rose, and completely shook off the depression which his seeming weariness of her company had been bringing on. He felt grateful in his turn that she should so well cover his retreat, and enable him to bear up under the snub he had been subjected to; the consequence being that they reached Blue Fish Creek on terms of demonstrative good-fellowship, sang from one hymn-book in church, and walked home by the sands again in cordial intimacy.

"Jest look at them two interestin' young things!" Mrs Denwiddie observed to her neighbour, as she pointed them out from the omnibus window. "Ain't they fond, now! It makes me feel better to look at them. It's kind of hard, you see, for us worldly-minded Americans, sometimes, to believe about Adam and Eve and their innocent ongoings mentioned in Scripter. There's nothing makes me so 'feared of turning into one of them sceptics the ministers are so down on, as that history; when I see the way young men and gals get on together, with never a thought but dollars and cents and sich. 'There ain't one of them as 'ud eat an apple as he knows'll disagree with him, jest to please his Betsy, nowadays,' I thought. But there!--you see an instance of what faithful love'll do. Jest look at them on the sands there, wanderin' along! They might be babies gatherin' shells, with their little spades in their hands."

"Do you mean the Montpelier schoolma'am?" the friend replied. "'Pears to me always like as she was jest vinegar--with her blue glasses and her knitting. I see she has left the glasses at home to-day--guess it's to get a better look at her young man. Wonder what he thinks of her? His taste must be pecooliar."

"They're true lovers, them two, believe me, Mrs Strange. If they ain't, there's none sich. It's more'n ten years since they were engaged, and he's been away all that time, to make his pile, and she's been a-waitin' and a-workin' till he could come back to her, and never a complaint. It's not a week yet, since she told me all about it, and not a man would she listen to, in all that time, out of pure faithfulness."

"There's few would try to shake her constancy, I'm thinkin'," said Mrs Strange; but her companion was too busy talking to heed her, and continued--

"Think of the young man keepin' her image before his mind's eye all them years! and the world so full of gals, and temptations of all kinds."

Lettice Deane, returning home in the same omnibus, sat opposite. She raised her eyebrows, looking in the speaker's face, her nostrils quivered, and the corners of her mouth, and then she buried her face in her handkerchief and laughed silently; or, at least, so thought Mrs Denwiddie, who returned her look with one of blackest indignation, calling her, in her own mind, "A sassy brat, and that stuck-up as no self-respectin' woman would demean herself by taking account of."

And the modern illustrations of Adam and Eve walked cheerfully homeward along the sands. It was indeed Eden to one of them--an Eden such as she had never hoped to enter, so bright that she could not think what she had done to earn it. As for the other, it did not appear exactly what were his thoughts, but he was cheerful, and perfectly kind and attentive to his companion.

At dinner, Gilbert and Maida were early in their places. They had earned an appetite by their long walk, and were duly hungry. Gilbert's soup was before him, his spoon was lifted half-way to his mouth, when the voices of a party in high spirits entering the room reached his ear. The tone of a familiar voice among the others drew his attention, and he raised his eyes. Senator Deane and his wife headed their party, advancing up the room; behind came Lettice and Rose Hillyard. Gilbert started, and the spoon slipped from his fingers and fell back in the plate with a clatter which resounded through the room.

Rose's eye was drawn in the direction, and she saw him. She grew pale to the lips and faltered, with a stop and a half-turn, as though she would leave the room; then her colour flooded back and mounted to her brow, her lips grew hard and set, and with a flash of the eye she turned away her head and walked proudly forward to her place; taking care that her back should be turned to the object which had disturbed her.

Gilbert's blood had rushed into his face when their eyes met, but he grew pale when she turned away, and he did not very speedily recover himself. His soup was taken away untasted, and he refreshed himself with ice-water instead.

Maida was filled with tender solicitude, and he would have been overwhelmed with her inquiries and suggestions, if he had been attending to what she said; but it scarcely seemed as if

he were. "Was it a qualm? Was he faint? Did he feel better now? Perhaps his heart was weak, and he had over-exerted himself in the sun. She would never forgive herself for taking him so long a walk. Would he not try some wine?" which last was an ill-advised question, seeing they were then in the State of Maine, where strong drink is not partaken of in public. Not that an innkeeper's guests must go without--far from it; but they must imbibe their stimulants *sub rosâ*, though the concealment is merely of a conventional kind.

Gilbert ate very little dinner, and poor Maida never taxed her skill to interest and enliven, with less success than during that meal. Her companion attempted to eat one thing and another, and he drank ice-water, but he had become deaf as the adder which refuses to hear the voice of the charmer. He parted from her at the dining-room door, saying he would go in search of brandy, as he really felt ill; and Maida ended the Sunday which had begun so brightly, in solicitude and wretchedness. She might have had as much sympathy as she pleased from her elderly friend, but the unending Denwiddie babble was more than she could endure. It was easier to be alone and nurse her anxiety. There was a foreboding on her spirit which she could not define, a clouding over of the future and its dawning hopes, which she felt but could not explain. Nothing had happened, so far as she knew, but she felt a frost in the air, which had been so warm and bland, and it was nipping the blossoms in her poor fool's paradise.

CHAPTER XXV.

ROSE AND THE RING.

When Rose was left alone with Margaret in the fisherman's hut, she sat down upon a bench before the fire and gazed into the embers, falling into a reverie in which ideas not all pleasurable chased each other as fitfully as the leaping flames which licked the new-laid log, as if searching for a spot on which they might fasten and take hold. Her companion sat by and wondered at her silence. She had been so gay a little before, while the men were still with them, and now her lips were tightly closed, and there came an angry frown upon her brow. That changed into a look of triumph and disdain, which faded in its turn into one almost soft and pitiful; and that in time gave place to one of sadness, and she sighed, and her features fell into the desponding look of one who bids adieu to hope. She moved impatiently, as if to shake off brooding thoughts which were settling down to oppress and stifle her--as some stricken animal might struggle to beat back the greedy kites swooping down to tear their prey, ere death had prepared the feast. She roused herself with an effort, and turned to speak.

"You have had a good time, Margaret, have you not?"

"Perhaps I might say the same to you, Rose. You were very long of returning from your stroll. But I will not deny that I am glad we missed the boat."

"You might tell a blind man that, my dear. The rest of us can see it. I admire your taste. He is a good fellow, I am sure, and handsome; and devoted too, if signs tell anything."

"We have known each other all our lives--at least, since I was quite a little girl. It must be five years that we have known one another now."

"A long time."

"But you will promise me, Rose dear, not to say anything to anybody when we get back? Nobody knows that he came here. Still, Uncle Joseph is here too--my guardian as well as my uncle, you know--and you are here, another girl to keep me in countenance, so there is nothing Mrs Grundy can disapprove. If he and you had not joined us, I should not have missed the steamer, you may be sure; or if I had--but that is no matter.

* * * * *

"Mamma is very fond of him, you must know--or she used to be. But she is afraid of our becoming engaged, and she has been bothering, ever since we came to Clam Beach.... Uncle Joseph is safe, I am sure, though he will not acknowledge that he approves. I know he will not cause trouble. So it all rests with you, dear. Promise me. You will not make mischief? A careless word might do it, you see. But you will forget his being here? It is Jake's boat, you know, we are to go home in tomorrow morning.... He is a fisherman, you know, who fortunately was here when the storm overtook us."

"I know, dear. We won't spoil sport, I promise you; and we will help you all we can--all *I* can, I

ought to say. What right have I to promise for your uncle? I am talking nonsense. What help can I--I declare my mind is astray--I must be growing sleepy. Let us see how we are to dispose ourselves for the night. They are to call us at daylight, you know, and it must be late."

Margaret had shot an intelligent glance at Rose when that "we" slipped out unawares. Her lips parted in a smile at the endeavour to correct it. She understood it all. Rose changed colour, though she said nothing more; but both were unwontedly affectionate when they said good night, and composed themselves to sleep.

The early morning saw the party afloat again on the bay, under all the sail their boat would carry, making straight for Lippenstock, and in the best of spirits. Even Peter Wilkie was gay; there was breakfast in prospect, and a bath, at Lippenstock. As for the others, the present was enough, and they did not waste thought upon the future: cutting smoothly through the glassy tide which babbled at their prow, fanned by cool airs, and seated where it was best to be, exchanging short sentences in undertones, with long and pleasant gaps of silence in between. If any brow betrayed a line of discontent, it was Blount's. Things had not ended altogether as he had hoped or wished. When he had hired Jake and his boat, he had thought that perhaps he should meet Margaret wandering by herself, that he might persuade her to an elopement, and sail away; and this was all which had come of it. They were sailing, indeed, but the "away" was only for Margaret, while he, "poor devil," as he told himself with deep compassion, must stay behind at Lippenstock. However, there would be other chances, more excursions and merrymakings at which he might surreptitiously assist, and some time win his point. She was worth it, as he told himself, lying gazing up in her face, while her eyes roved idly across the dancing water; and even if it should come to her mother's ears that he had been on the island that night, the news would aid his hopes, rather than hinder. It would incite her to worry the girl worse than ever, and Margaret was not of the kind to be worried for long. There was the look in her nostril of one who could take the bit in her teeth and bolt, if fretted too far by injudicious reining.

Rose and Joseph sat behind the other two, Rose calmly, even impassively perhaps, accepting the assiduous little cares of which it seemed as if Joseph could not lavish enough. At last he took her hand, lying nerveless on her lap, and began to examine it.

"Take off your glove, dearest," he whispered; "I want to measure your finger. How can I feel secure of this treasure I so little deserve, till I have fettered it with a link? When I see my ring upon your hand, I shall feel better assured that we are indeed engaged."

There came a line of faint contraction between her eyebrows, which was scarcely a frown. It may have been mere impatience, or perhaps it was dread or remorse.

"Not now," she said abruptly, withdrawing her hand and looking away to the harbour, which was wearing near. "My glove is tight; my hands feel hot and swollen this morning. Another time," and drew a quick short breath which seemed half a sob. Then turning round to him, as though she feared he might feel vexed, she added, with a doubtful smile, "There's time enough, you know. We shall be at the wharf before I could draw it on again;" and then, hurried and constrained, plunged into voluble expression of such commonplaces as occurred to her.

Joseph felt chilled, though he told himself there was no ground for feeling so. It seemed as if the first thin cloud had come between him and the sun, the sun so lately risen, in whose beams he had been warming his poor starved heart. He had little to answer to the commonplaces; they ran themselves out ere long, and both were lapsing into silence when they reached the shore.

The party of four which drove from Lippenstock was not a very talkative one; in fact, if the truth were told, all were more or less sleepy. The hour was still on the early side of noon; but when the day begins between three o'clock and four, for persons whose waking hour is seven--when those persons, instead of breaking their fast when they get up, spend hours in the keen morning air and on the water before breakfast, a heaviness supervenes, and the system of the individual makes it late in the day, however early be the time which the clock may indicate. Wilkie, as was not unnatural, began to feel the expedition something of a bore. He had not been admired so much by the ladies, or consulted by the men, as to compensate for irregular meals or hours, and indifferent repose on the open shore. Margaret had parted from Walter, and for her the pleasure was over--something to remember and think about, but all of the past. Rose was pensive and very still, though it did not appear from her behaviour of what nature were her thoughts. Joseph was yet under the influence of that chilling sensation which had fallen on him in the boat--a creeping melancholy which stole on him in spite of every consideration which good sense could suggest, the reaction perhaps from his transports of the night before. He found himself sinking into despondent broodings, from which every now and then he would awaken with a start, and tip up his horses with an unnecessary flick of the whip. How much these dumb servants have to bear from the wayward moods of their masters, and how many an unmerited cut descends upon their patient sides!

Rose spent the remainder of the morning in her room, sitting listless and despondent where she had sunk on entering it. There was no eye present before whom she must hang out the veils and disguises of conventional life. Her head hung forward on her breast, her hands lay folded on her lap. The light had faded from her eyes, her features were drawn and set, and she looked as unlike a promised bride, a woman who, of her own free will, has accepted an offer of marriage, as it was possible to imagine.

The man was all she could desire, she told herself. The disparity in their years did not once present itself to her mind. She felt very friendly to him, liked him, respected him; but she could not love. "Could she ever love any one?"--that was the miserable thought which rose before her mind; and she was no inexperienced maid whose heart still sleeps, to fool herself into the belief that such liking as hers was the mysterious visitant she had read about in books, and awaited to descend and stir the waters of her being. It was duty, not love, which she was taking to her breast. She knew it, and looked forward to her life in the greyness of the coming years with an overflowing sense of pity. But she did not falter or think of drawing back. No; she would go on with it, and do her duty, and no one should ever know. But it was pitiful, all the same; though it must be--for she would have it so. Here in her solitary chamber there needed no disguise; and she looked hopelessly around her, wondering if there could be any escape, or if this weary part she was undertaking to play would last for long. It might last for fifty years, she thought, looking down at her hands. How shapely and strong they looked--so firm, and with so full a tide of vigorous life tingling in every pulse! And the ring--she remembered the morning's episode in the boat. It was not there yet; the jeweller had not begun to make it. How it would scorch, that little hoop of gold and brilliants, and confine and shackle her! There was respite for the present, but it would not be for long--and she scarcely desired that it should be.

The gong sounded sooner than she could have believed. She must go down and face the world again, and play her part; but there was consolation even in this. It showed how quickly time could wear away. The years, be they ever so grey, would run their course with the same even and imperceptible current, and there would be an end at last. She rose to resume the armour of conventional life. She bathed her temples, smoothed her hair before the glass, and arrayed herself as usual; and when the next gong sounded, she was once more her ordinary self--bright, proud, and confident, without a sign of care, or seemingly a wish left unfulfilled.

The Deanes had heard of her return, and were awaiting her in the drawing-room to go down to dinner. Lettice and the rest bantered her on her escapade.

"Staying out o' nights, Miss Rose," the Senator cried, jocosely. "And without a latch-key! What next?"

The next, for her, was to meet Gilbert Roe's eyes looking straight into her own. It was like the sudden onslaught of an ambushed foe, on a band marching in careless order. They form square if they can, and stand to their arms. It was well for her she had so recently looked to her armour. The shock to her nerves was severe, but her spirit rose in defiance. She recovered, without betraying herself before the crowded room, and was more than usually gay all through dinner. It was a relief, however, when the repast was ended, and she could saunter with Lettice along the sands away from curious eyes, and feel at ease.

"What a shock it must have been to you, Rose! I meant to have given you warning, but you came down so late, and the old folks were so hungry and impatient, that there was no chance.... However, you bore up splendidly--and now, it is over."

"Yes, I am glad it is over; and glad I did not know beforehand."

"If he is a gentleman, he will go first thing to-morrow morning."

"It is no matter whether he goes or stays."

"To think of his assurance! He came to me in the parlour, last night when I was dancing, to ask if you were here."

"Yes?" and there was a tone of softening in Rose's voice as she said it.

"But you may be sure I gave him no satisfaction."

Rose sighed a little, but not audibly.

"This morning, again, when we were walking to church, what does he do, do you think, but join me?--which, after the setting down I had given him last night, was really more than a girl could be expected to stand."

Rose looked interested now and softened. "And? Well?" she said.

"Well, I just treated him as he deserved; would have nothing to do with him; got round to the other side of my escort, and ignored him altogether."

Rose's sigh was audible this time.

"But you need not pity him, Rose, dear; or not much, at any rate. He is not inconsolable; and, what is better, he has a consoler. And such a one! You could not imagine an odder belle for the dashing Bertie Roe we can remember. He is no longer hypercritical as to good looks, I can tell you."

"Who is it?"

"Whom would you suppose? You know the washed-out little Yankee schoolma'am with the blue

goggles? That's her!"

"You must be mistaken."

"So I was sure myself, at first. But no. I came home from church in the omnibus, and an old thing sat opposite me, who takes a most motherly interest in the pair--a friend of the schoolma'am. You should have heard her talk about them! It was just too altogether rich and comical. She says the sweet young things have been faithfully attached for the last ten years. To think of Bertie's constancy, you know! And they are going to be married. And in the meantime they spend their time gathering shells and grubbing in the sand together, for she mentioned their having little spades."

"They are most welcome," cried Rose, impatiently. "Do not let us bother about them any more." There was an angry colour in her cheek, and fire in her eye, and the sound of her voice grated harshly.

Lettice began to wonder if her story had been judicious, or well-timed. She was Rose's stanch friend and partisan, willing to do or think whatever Rose might like best. It was in espousing Rose's side that she felt hostile to Gilbert; but she began to doubt, now, if what she had been telling appeared to Rose as droll as to herself. And yet every one said that Rose had such a sense of humour!

There was silence between the friends. They no longer sauntered, but stepped out quickly, Rose hurrying the pace with strides of varying length, till Lettice had difficulty in keeping up with her. Each fibre of her frame was strung into fierce activity. She even snatched the fan, hanging idly from her waist, as if its dangling were a provocation. She opened and closed it rudely once or twice, till some of the slender ribs gave way and got entangled; then, with an impatient gesture, caught it by both ends and broke the thing across, and flung it from her. And then she stopped, with the empty chain between her fingers, and turned to her companion with a short, dry laugh.

"You will say I am in one of my tempers, Lettie, dear. You are good to bear with me.... You are out of breath, too. Come, let's walk slower. I have something to tell you."

"Something nice, Rose? What is it, dearest?"

"Pray, not that tender sympathetic tone, Lettice, 'an you love me,' as they say in the theatre, or you will drive me wild. What is there to condole about?... Nothing that I can see. If people who are strangers to me--whom I have said a hundred times I will have none of--want to marry, what is it to me?"

"Nothing, dear, nothing," Lettice answered soothingly. "Nothing whatever to you."

"It is less than nothing; for I am going to be married myself--at least I am engaged. Wish me joy, dear. You are the first to be told."

"You are? I knew you would be, from the first. You liked him the first day you saw him. Indeed I wish you happiness. I am quite sure you will be happy, dear." And they embraced; or Lettice did, at least. Rose submitted rather than joined in the caress, and there was a look of deep self-pity in her face, as if she doubted about the happiness which her friend foretold. Her eyes moistened, and then, with a start which was half a sob, she recovered herself, and put her arm through her friend's, and turned homewards.

"And how did it happen, dear? Tell me all about it."

"The usual way, dear; though people do say these things are never done twice alike. You have some experience, yourself, about it, I fancy; though you are so good to the poor fellows, that you never betray them, or divulge their disappointment."

"It is bad enough for them to be refused, without being laughed at into the bargain.... But tell me about the accepting, at least. I have no experience of that. Is it not hard to say yes, and not feel the least bit ashamed of one's self?"

"One does not remember one's own part in the tragedy so well. One grows bewildered at such a time. I am not sure that one knows exactly what one says or does. But the gentleman seems to understand. That is the main point."

"And what did *he* say then?... I declare, Rose, you are telling me nothing!"

"He said scarcely anything. I did not think a man could say so little, to mean so much. It was the way he did it--the way he was so still--the sound of his voice--his touch. He meant it all, Lettie, so deeply. It was in that he was so strong. One seemed to feel it in the air about him. It was overwhelming. And oh, dear, I feel so small and worthless beside the earnestness of that man's love! I feel humbled, I am so little worthy of love like his."

"The proof that you are worthy, is his having given it to you.... I declare!" The last exclamation had escaped her involuntarily. Her roving eyes had alighted on the figures of Gilbert Roe and Maida Springer together upon the sands at a distance.

Rose lifted her eyes from the ground, which they had sought while she was making her confidences, and turned them in the direction to which Lettice was looking. She saw, and the view communicated a shock, which thrilled through all her frame. Again her colour rose, and her teeth were set, and she grasped the arm of her friend. The pathetic drooping of her eyelids had vanished, and the lights beneath them flashed like living coals. She said nothing, but she quickened her steps--they had turned, some time before, when her mood had changed from fiery to pathetic--and now they were back within the shadow of the hotel, extending itself to the eastward and the south as day declined.

Upon the gallery, along beyond the entrance, she saw Joseph Naylor, with his feet on the balusters and his chair tilted back, a newspaper before him and a cigar between his teeth, enjoying the tranquil afternoon. "I shall go in now, Lettice, dear; but do not let me drag you indoors so early. There is something I wanted to mention to Mr Naylor, and there he is, above and disengaged."

Lettice strolled away and soon found other company. Rose hurried forward alone, her eyes still flashing and her cheek aflame. There was no one on the gallery but Naylor, no one on the ground below looking up or taking heed; the moment was as private as though they had been again on Fessenden's Island.

"I fear I vexed you this morning in the boat," she said, coming upon him unexpectedly where he sat.

He looked up from his paper, let it fall, and sprang to his feet, throwing his cigar away. "Impossible, my dearest, even if you were to try. You have made me the very happiest man alive."

"But I was cross, though I did not mean it, and refused to take off my glove. It is off now. There!" and she held out her hand. "I have been looking for an opportunity to make it up. I was sleepy and out of sorts, I think."

"No wonder, with no bed to sleep in last night. But do not dream of apologising. You shall be cross with me whenever it so shall please you, and not a word to be said in amends when you are minded to relent."

"You will spoil me; it is not safe to be too worshipful with women. There is the finger you were good enough to want to measure."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MOTHERS.

Joseph was a happy man that evening. He was going to testify for the first time the pride and glory within him, by presenting a *cadeau* to his promised bride. How should he contrive that it might be rich and rare enough to express his worship, and be worthy of the object? Could he have fetched down a star--one of those which last night had beamed so kindly on their espousal--that might perhaps have been enough; but less than a star out of heaven seemed all inadequate. The writing-room of the hotel was too open and profane a place for him to sit in, while he indited his order to Tiffany the jeweller, for such a purpose. He made them carry store of stationery to his room. And then about the post. Did no mail go out to-night? The clerk reminded him rebukingly that it was Sunday. They never sent to the Junction on Sunday nights, and no one in serious-minded New England would wish them to do it. "Ten dollars for a messenger to go at once," was Joseph's sole reply, as he followed the stationery to his room, to be overtaken before he had gone many steps by the porter and the bell-boy, both eager to break the Sabbath at the price he had named.

Senator Deane, lounging by the clerk's desk, turned to Mr Sefton with a remarkably knowing look. "Canada Pacific. You bet! Something up. Telegraph clerk away for the day. Something important."

Sapphires, diamonds, and precious stones danced before the mind's eye of Joseph Naylor. How pale and small and poor they seemed to him! How could enough of them to testify his love, be collected on so trivial an object as a finger-ring? "Spare no expense," he wrote, offering an unusual price, and expressing his willingness to double it if needful. "Only let it be the best." The ring from Cleopatra's finger would have been too poor. And so the order was sent, and Tiffany of New York, having assured himself of the writer's sufficiency, sent a clerk with designs to wait on so lavish-minded a client.

The clerk arrived in due time, was closeted in long consultation, and on leaving could not but mention to the clerk of the house the princely order he had taken. The house-clerk listened with pride. It was a credit to Clam Beach; and in fancy he saw scores of fashionable damsels arriving with heaps of luggage, all hoping to be objects of a like munificence. He mentioned the circumstance, in confidence, to each male guest who came to him for cigar-lights; the males, as was to be expected, repeated it to the females, and soon there was not a soul in the house who had not heard the news. It was the common talk with every one but Joseph. He, good man, never doubted the closeness of his secret. He had not breathed a word, but to his sister-in-law, and she would not circulate the report. She had been behaving to him like an injured woman ever since his telling her; but she had not lost hope, he suspected, promising herself, on the contrary, that it would end in nothing; and therefore would not help to assure it by spreading the news.

Those were happy days for Joseph. What plunging in the early bracing surf! What morning walks upon the sands! What shady lounges in the afternoon! And then the cheerful evenings in the parlours, or the quiet of the galleries on starlit nights! He was with her continually, drinking in sweet influence from her presence, and striving to attune himself to her changeful moods.

Yes; her moods were certainly becoming very changeful--liable to abrupt transitions from a stillness which seemed almost despondent, and so different from anything he had seen in her before their engagement, to a gaiety which at times grew feverish and even forced. She had grown restless, too, of late, unable or unwilling to remain long in one place, or engaged in one pursuit. Suddenly, in the hottest of the afternoon, she would start up and rouse her drowsy intimates to play lawn-tennis; and ere the game was half played out, she would declare herself sick of it, and beg some bystander to take her place.

Joseph looked on in tender sympathy. It was what was to be expected, he told himself, and would soon wear off. The free young life was chafing at first beneath the yoke she had herself assumed--the filly, unbroke to harness, was galled by the collar; but soon she would settle down to steady running. He must humour her for the present. And what delight there was in doing it! And she was always kind to him, and showed that she appreciated his thoughtfulness and forbearance by many a grateful look and little speech. He only wished that he had more to bear and to do for her sake; he was so richly rewarded when the humour changed, and her mood became remorseful. Then, as if she could not sufficiently express herself to him, she would relieve her feelings by caresses and endearments to his nieces. She was fast friends with them now, especially with Margaret, even to the length of exciting a little pique in Lettice Deane.

And Margaret had need of sympathy and backing, and all the friendship she could secure. Her mother "was going on just dreadful," as she expressed it with more force than elegance to her sister Lucy, who, however, observed a judicious neutrality, agreeing so far with the maternal desire to settle Margaret in Toronto, as being a much jollier place for herself to live in than Jones's Landing.

Mrs Naylor's perturbation of spirit on receiving her brother's intelligence lasted two full days, during which there seemed nothing else worth thinking about. The world itself seemed coming to an end, and what did anything matter? After that, it began to occur to her that there were other interests in life--her own, for instance. If Joseph was going to bring home a wife to Jones's Landing, the place would be insupportable. She must remove to Ottawa or Toronto; and that she might do her duty there in bringing out Lucy properly--so she phrased it to herself in summoning her moral forces to her assistance--it was indispensable that Margaret should have an established position. With that, it began to strike her that Wilkie no longer hovered near them, and that Ann Petty was become the recipient of the attentions which last week had been bestowed on Margaret. His mother, even, it almost seemed, had begun to hold aloof; and yet the supposition was too preposterous. That a half-bred old thing like that, should think to take up and lay down at pleasure, her--Mrs Naylor of Jones's Landing! What were things coming to? The creature must have heard of Joseph's fatuous engagement--the mercenary, horrid, vulgar old woman! And she was vulgar. Mrs Naylor saw it clearly enough now, though last week she had looked quite kindly on her social solecisms as being so racy and original. But at least she was not so crushed and humbled yet that "the Wilkie woman" might trample on her with impunity. The creature should have a lesson, if Mrs Naylor could give her one, and be taught her place. To think that a Naylor--a daughter of hers--should be trifled with and all but compromised by a--a what was she to call him?--a clerk in a public office--something not much better than a schoolmaster--merely because she, the mother, had kindly taken some notice of him! That nice quiet young Petty must be brought on, if only to show the futility of such an idea. Encouragement was all he wanted, and Margaret should give him that, or she would know why. She did not blame the girl now for being impervious to the other--indeed, his mother's impertinence had made her glad of it--but she would insist on her being civil to Petty. There must be no more nonsense. As for the old woman, she must have it out with her, and let her know her place.

An opportunity arose in the heat of the afternoon, when some irrepressibles of the younger set played lawn-tennis, and such of the elders as were not asleep looked on. The shade at that hour was confined to a limited space, and thither the lady spectators carried their camp-stools, and pressed one another more closely than the state of the weather made quite agreeable. Mrs Wilkie was the last to place herself, and it happened that she took ground at Mrs Naylor's side, who had planned her place nicely, to be in shadow, and yet be the last of her row, so as to be free at least on one side.

"Mrs Wilkie?" she said, turning in surprise and displeasure, which she made no attempt to conceal. "Would you not be more comfortable farther back? It is less crowded, and the shadow is broader."

"I'll do," Mrs Wilkie answered determinedly, unfurling an umbrella, which interfered considerably with Mrs Naylor's view. "If people would sit closer, there would be room enough. I see no reason for leading people to sit behind, and those of no poseetion at all taking room for two."

"But your umbrella intercepts any little air there is."

"I need it to keep off the sun."

"I declare I shall suffocate! Pray take it down."

"I won't! Why should I? Sit behind there; or go round to the front of the house. You'll get it all to yourself."

"Really--Mrs Wilkie--but what else can one expect?" and she sighed with contemptuous resignation.

Mrs Wilkie bridled, with a little snort, moved her stool an inch or two nearer, and held the umbrella in provoking proximity to Mrs Naylor's eye.

"These promiscuous gatherings are dreadful," moaned Mrs Naylor. "This is the reward one may expect for not taking care whom we allow to slide into our intimacy." Then, in a very superior tone, she added, "I must beg of you to put down that umbrella."

"You may beg till you're tired, ma'am; my umbrelly is going to stay as it is. To hear some people, out of little, country, back-door settlements! Ye would not think that it was a shanty among the stumps, they lived in at home. The pint of an umbrelly needn't trouble them so much. Does she think people are to be put about by sich as she? Her and her daughter setting up to trifle with gentlemen of intelleck and poseetion, forsooth! Yes, ma'am, ye may look! and be as mad as ye like. It's shame ye should be thinking of yourself and your girls--two sassy, underhand, designing brats!"

"My good woman, what can you possibly know about me and my daughters? Were you ever in your life under the same roof with gentlefolks, before you came to Clam Beach?"

Mrs Wilkie grew hot with indignation to hear herself addressed as a "good woman." It is a mystery to the male mind why this should be so, but it is undeniable that when one lady is minded to put the last indignity upon another, she speaks of her as a "woman." The only analogous trait--and we commend it to those with a turn for natural history--appears in coloured circles, where, as the most crushing retort in a scolding-match, the disputants are wont to apostrophise each other as "you black nigger." But this is digression.

Mrs Wilkie grew hot and indignant at being called a woman. It confused and silenced her. The thread of her ideas was broken, and she was not equal to a prompt rejoinder. But she was not going to give in on that account--being, indeed, more angry than before. It was to avenge a slight to her son that she had started on the war-path, and now the insult to herself added fuel to her wrath. She pressed her lips tightly together, and moved closer to Mrs Naylor, as the readiest way of being provoking.

"Where are you crushing to?" cried the other. "Would you force me into Mrs Petty's lap?" and then, after a pause, "unmannerly woman!" This time the word failed of its effect. "Woman" used as a missile is no better than a bomb-shell or a torpedo. It goes off but once. It passed unheeded, and Mrs Wilkie rejoined--

"You're great upon the manners to-day. Ye'll be making manners to Mrs Petty, as ye made them to me wance, to try if ye can inveigle her son into the clutches of your little-worth daughter?"

"What do you mean?" cried the other, angrily.

"Just what I say. But ye may save yourself the trouble. The girl's well able to fish on her own account. She has a beau of her own on the sly. What do ye think of that? I thought I'd make ye wince, for all your airs and pretensions! She had a young man waiting for her on the island. And never said a word to ye about it, I'm thinking? And then, to have the assurance to take Mr Wilkie away stravaiging with her, like a toy dog, before the eyes of all the company! Ye may well start and look affronted."

Mrs Naylor did start, but the assault was so outrageous that she could not but show fight.

"Your son was disappointed, I presume, that he could not have Miss Naylor's undivided attention; and so, when he comes home, he circulates idle tattles to her disadvantage. Is that conduct becoming a gentleman? I should say it was an act of the kind of person whom gentlemen call a cad."

Peter Wilkie, who had heard his mother's voice wax louder, looked round to where they sat. The angry looks of both ladies told him all. He hastened towards them, and if anything more had been needed to incriminate his poor old mother, her guilty and frightened looks at his approach would have sufficed. She pressed her hand to her side and rolled her eyes.

"Your palpitations, mother?" he said. "You have been exerting yourself in the heat. Come up-stairs to your room and lie down." He gave her his arm, and led her away looking like a bold child detected in a misdemeanour. She did not appear again in public till the cool of the evening, when she presented a penitent and crestfallen aspect, very different from her warlike demeanour on the tennis-ground.

Mrs Naylor's spirit sank almost as rapidly as her foe's. Now that the stir of battle was at an end, she could sit and make up her list of killed and wounded. Whether the enemy had taken flight or been withdrawn from the contest, this was a grievous blow which she had dealt at parting. She had been pluming herself on her skilful management of Margaret's affairs; and it now appeared that she had managed nothing, and the objectionable attachment was like to be too much for her. But the girl should not have her way, if she could help it. She would keep a sharper eye on her than ever. It was that pernicious young Blount's going away which had thrown her off her guard. But her eyes were opened now, and she would watch; and meanwhile she would rate Margaret soundly, and bring her to a sense of the turpitude of her behaviour.

She did so, and Margaret had to expiate in much weariness of spirit her happy little outbreak on Fessenden's Island.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN OBDURATE DAUGHTER.

Margaret had a bad quarter of an hour that afternoon, when the lawn-tennis was over. She felt no misgiving as she went up-stairs. The danger had been got over, she thought, on Sunday morning, when her mother started off in full career upon the other scent. What a happy circumstance was Uncle Joseph's engagement! She positively loved Rosa now for having accepted him. And Rose herself was so dear a girl, the very nicest aunt whom Joseph could have found her; binding him closer to them, if that were possible, instead of estranging him as another might have done. It was therefore an altogether unexpected shock when her mother, following her into her room, closed and fastened the door, and in a voice which shook with anger, demanded of her what she meant.

"Mean, mother dear? I do not understand you."

"You know perfectly what I mean, you double, deceitful girl!"

Margaret understood now. The tempest, delayed for a while, was upon her. She hung her head, and bent like a willow before the blast.

"You may well cower," her mother cried, pacing up and down. Her spirit boiled, to think that she had been so duped--she, the wise one, the manager--and she could neither sit nor stand still, in her vehement indignation.

"That I should be mother of a girl whose name can be mentioned as I have heard you spoken of this day! Shameless, deceitful, unwomanly--oh!" Words failed her as she stood with clenched hands and eyes of wrath, which might have turned the other to stone, had she dared look up and meet them.

"Say that it is not true! Tell me that woman has lied!--that there was no man with you on the island but your uncle and her detestable son!

"You do not answer me? Speak! Let me hear that there is not a word of truth in her horrid insinuations. I will even say that I am not sorry you would have none of such a woman's son;" and here her voice veered round into the minor key. "I shall not press you to think of *him*. His mother is no better than a common scold. Do you hear me, Margaret?

"You will not speak? Is it that you cannot deny the scandalous things she has been saying?--that you could plan a surreptitious meeting, upon a lonely island, with a man?

"What will people say? It could have been but a chance that your uncle was there to save

appearances. Have you no thought for your character? Is every scurrilous beldame to bandy your name about?--and have the right to do it? Have you no womanly pride? and will you drag your innocent young sister in the mire with you?--and your too trusting mother? What have we done that you should expose us to public scorn?

"Ah me! that I should have lived for this! How could you do it? To dig your mother's grave before her eyes! Say that you did not mean it!--that it was thoughtlessness!--that you listened to the voice of a tempter!--that you will not do it again! He is a serpent, Margaret.

"You do not answer me? Ah! my poor heart! How it throbs!" and she pressed her side, and sank into a chair. "You will kill me, Margaret, with shame and grief. A mother cannot survive such undutifulness. My blood will cry at you from the ground! What peace can you ever hope to know, when you have killed your mother?" and here her handkerchief came into use. She covered her face and sobbed.

Margaret was greatly moved. Her eyes were full. She durst not speak, even if she would; she must have broken down had she attempted it. She was distressed to see her mother shedding tears. To be threatened with her early death was terrible. She would do anything to calm her--anything else, at least, whatever it might cost herself. But she had given her promise to Walter--poor Walter! whom her mother used to be so fond of. How could she take it again? It was no longer hers. She could only stand in despair and shame, and see her mother weep herself back into composure.

Mrs Naylor's composure returned all the sooner, that nothing seemed likely to come of her having yielded to her feelings. She pulled the handkerchief from her reddened eyes, and with a concluding sob which was partly a sniff of impatience, put it back in her pocket.

"I declare, Margaret," she cried, "you are harder than flint! One might as well cry at a slate roof as you. It just runs off without softening you in the least. You are obdurate. You have no feeling, and no heart. The momentary indulgence of a headstrong whim is all you think of. Consequences to your family, or even yourself, you never dream of considering. But you shall not ruin yourself, however much you may desire it, even if I have to lock you up. You will please to understand that you are to remain by me from this time on, and not to leave me without permission. You have made me ill enough with your undutifulness to enable me to tell people quite honestly that I am poorly, and need your care. Now, understand! If you leave my side without my sending you, I shall follow and bring you back before the assembled company; and I fancy, although you are impervious to higher considerations, you will not wish to be the laughing-stock of the hotel. If you leave me, I shall come and fetch you back, and there will be a scene, I promise you.

"Now do not stand there biting your lips in dumb rebellion; I am not done yet. I do not insist on your encouraging Mr Wilkie; in fact, after the setting down I have given his mother, I do not suppose he will venture to intrude on us. But mind what you are about with young Mr Petty. I will not have him repulsed or trifled with. It was pitiful to see how forlornly he crept about the steamboat on our return from the island, after your outrageous behaviour in leaving him all alone. If he should be willing to overlook the slight, I insist on your behaving properly to him for the future. With his talents and his interest, he will be Attorney-General one day; so mind what you are about."

Margaret felt too well sat upon to venture a reply. She had dared say nothing while her mother held forth at large, and now that she had talked herself out of breath, she feared to tempt her to break out anew; but like others who have been silenced without being convinced, she only wanted time and opportunity to return to her old paths. Though sat upon, she was neither broken nor crushed. It is a state of things which in the present day is not unfrequent. Rulers having grown to take things easily, allow the subject to have his head, until he goes too far. Then they put on authority with a spurt, find it irksome to themselves, and take it off again too soon. It is only systematic repression which need hope to prevail, and the arm which applies that, must never grow weary or relax.

Margaret sat disconsolately at her mother's elbow that evening, and felt like a martyr, while her fancies flew away in pursuit of Walter Blount. "Poor fellow! he was thinking of her, no doubt--walking the streets of Lippenstock, and feeling so lonely. How dreadful this separation must be to him! But she would be true. She could never love another. She would not try. She would never marry any one else, however they might try to force her. No; she would pine--she was sure she would--grow pale and thin; and nobody would mind her after that. By-and-by she would grow old, and have poor health; and she would still be single, with nothing to think about but her own faithfulness, and how happy she might have been if her misguided friends would have allowed it. And then her mother would be sorry, when it was too late; but she would forgive her, and tend her declining years to the last. What a beautiful touching martyr life it would all make! but so terribly dull." She pictured to herself a desolate hearth, with not a creature to keep her company but a stupid cat upon a footstool blinking at the fire, and herself in spectacles and a cap, knitting or making clothes for the poor, beneficent to everybody, but sadly moped herself--and all for Walter! She grew consoled in thinking about it. It was as good as a play--at least a dull one. The others were beginning to dance, now; but she would not dance, though her mother had given her leave when Walter Petty came to ask her. She had a headache, she said; and now she knew she must refuse every one else that evening. What of that? It was making a sort of commencement of

the life she saw in store for her in the future. Poor girl!

A mood so doleful does not last, however, when we are young and healthy. It grew tantalising to Margaret to see the others enjoying themselves, and made her feel neglected; and she welcomed Rosa when Joseph brought her to sit beside his family, and accustom Mrs Naylor to the prospect of a sister-in-law. The jeweller's clerk having divulged that he had ordered a magnificent ring for a lady, it was useless to affect reserve. He accepted the people's congratulations calmly, as his due; and his sister-in-law, making a virtue of necessity, endeavoured to do so likewise. Mrs Deane was in the little knot by Mrs Naylor's sofa--good-natured people who did not believe in her ailments, but had no objection to humouring her, and found the fixed centre of an invalid's couch convenient in that fortuitous concourse of atoms. Mrs Naylor engrossed herself with Mrs Deane, Rose's chaperon, that her feeling towards Rose herself might be less apparent. It was oppressive to go on talking pleasantly to one whom she would have liked to address in quite other terms, had it been permissible. Wherefore Rose fell out of the conversation and turned to Margaret, with whom she had more in common.

"How are you here, Margaret? You have neither sung, played, nor danced. What is the matter?"

"Mamma is poorly. She needs some one by to fetch her smelling-bottle and keep her company when other people go away." She said it with much sobriety and demureness of manner, but the act of saying appeared to dissolve the little which remained of her self-restraint. She bent forward and took Rose's hand, adding in an undertone, "She knows. She has been told about the island. She is coming between us. Wants to break off everything. But she can't! I will not give him up. I will have nothing to say to any one else. Oh Rose! what am I to do? I cannot live if I do not see him sometimes. What shall I do?"

Rose's eyes were roving far away, as were her thoughts; she was looking over Margaret's head, as Margaret leant forward and whispered. By a distant doorway stood a group of men, and her eyes turned dreamily and of themselves in that direction. The group parted to let two ladies enter, an elder and a younger one. The latter addressed a gentleman in passing, and carried him away between herself and her friend from his fellow-loungers. Rose coloured and started, then, meeting Margaret's look of surprise, she controlled herself--

"Forgive me, Margaret. My thoughts were wool-gathering; I scarcely caught your words."

Margaret repeated her words without surprise. She had observed how absent-minded Rose had grown, her varying moods, her starts and flushings, and sudden growings pale; but then she was engaged to Uncle Joseph, and doubtless these were symptoms of the delightful malady she laboured under herself, though she hoped that she concealed her own little tumults of the spirit more successfully.

Rose was all attention and eager interest now--quite vehemently interested, it really seemed.

"Your happiness for life is at stake, Margaret. I will not stand by and see you robbed of the man of your choice. And he is so nice! Joseph thinks all the world of him, I know. I see Joseph coming this way. We must devise something for you. My own idea is that you should get married at once. It will be easier to reconcile your mother afterwards. But here he is."

Joseph sat down beside his affianced, and she was so eager to speak to him that he was delighted. He too had observed her fits of absence, and had attributed them to the same cause as Margaret; but he wondered that they did not begin to subside as the idea of her engagement grew familiar. She was eager enough now. How pleasant it was! And it was in Margaret she was interesting herself, which was "nice" in her.

Mrs Naylor observed the eagerness, and was disgusted. It was positively indelicate, she thought, for a girl not yet married to make such open advances before a roomful of people. "Poor Joseph! What a fool he was! And how he would suffer for it by-and-by! A bold, forward girl!"

Joseph and Rose went on talking, regardless of that same Susan and anything she might think. Joseph was averse to interfering; but Rose talked him over, which, as this was the first time she had asked him to do her a favour, was not difficult. And then, his views on many subjects were different now from what they had been not long before. True love had grown more precious in his eyes, and poor Susan's wisdom perhaps less so, since she had expressed her disapproval of his matrimonial scheme.

"Well, Margaret," he said, sitting down between her and Rose, with a hand laid upon the hands of each, "we have made up our minds to help you if we can; but I think you should try and get away quietly, and avoid fuss. I will try and smooth matters with your mother after you are gone. So try and manage it quietly."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THEY HAVE IT OUT.

The next three or four days produced nothing remarkable. Margaret remained in close attendance on her mother, who did her best to make her feel like a naughty child. Her only solace was Rose's sympathy; but notwithstanding it, she felt at times most dreadfully wicked, and always depressed and contrite. Only the thought of Walter's loneliness at Lippenstock kept her true; and she did contrive to send him little notes, and to receive through Rosa notes in return, notwithstanding the sharp eye which her mother kept upon her movements.

Rose herself continued feverish and uncertain enough to occasion surprise to all her friends. She, so light-hearted and brave, so bright and clever--that she should appear in the character of tremulous and wistful maid, on the fulfilment of what had seemed her dearest wish! She was as kind and intimate with Joseph as ever; and he told himself that he had nothing to complain of, that he must remember their difference in age, and that with time they would grow nearer to one another. But still he felt a barrier between them--a reserve which all his ardour failed to surmount--an unresponsive silence when his raptures strove to fit themselves to words, which chilled him in spite of his assurances to himself that all was well. In desultory conversation she would be as bright as ever; but as he strove to lead up to converse more close, he found himself checked he knew not how; for she did not repulse, she only failed to respond. Her favourite topic to converse on was Margaret's attachment: on that she would warm even to enthusiasm, and run on at any length, till he almost felt it in his heart to grow jealous of his favourite niece.

Lettice Deane was the only one who had a clue to Rose's strangeness. She felt sorry for her and greatly surprised, blaming Roe, notwithstanding her declaration that he was nothing to her; and vowed that his conduct in hanging on at the Beach, was ungentlemanlike, and altogether abominable.

Roe himself seemed as feverish and ill at ease as the lady. He took little interest in the society of the other men, and seemed to submit to the company of Maida rather than court it. Maida felt that he was growing moody on her hands, and that their intimacy was not progressing. "Yet why did he stay on?" she asked herself. "There was no one else in the house for whom he seemed to care." She must learn to be more devoted and winning, she thought, and get over this constraint on his part, which she felt was growing up between them; but she did not see very clearly how she was to set about it. He detested forward women and bold women--he often said so--and was severely critical when they sat together on the galleries looking down on the young people upon the sands, who, after the manner of their kind, had a way of assorting themselves in couples as they took their evening strolls.

It was arranged that on a certain day there should be a "clam-bake" on the sands at Blue Fish Creek. It was to be an affair on a gigantic scale. The keepers of half-a-dozen establishments along the coast had got it up. Bushels innumerable of clams were to be roasted around a huge bonfire; an ox was to be roasted whole; and the seaside visitors, cloyed with innkeepers' fare and indoor luxury, were for once to dine uncomfortably on the sands, upon slices of half-raw beef and platefuls of scorched shell-fish. As a slice of lemon gives savour to insipid veal, so a rough and indigestible banquet in the open air revives a relish in jaded guests for the daily superfluity of everything, which hotel dinners provide. There was to be a dance in the town hall afterwards, and the company would drive home in the dark. All Clam Beach was to go, as a matter of course; even the valetudinarian Mrs Naylor resolved to venture. Margaret took care that Walter should know, and--for why indulge in useless mystery?--they were to make their push for freedom on that return journey.

The affair came off as designed. The weather was propitious, the guests hungry, in high spirits, and more numerous even than had been expected. They seated themselves in parties on the sands. The Naylors and Deanes naturally sat together, along with the Pettys and Wilkies--Ann Petty beside Peter Wilkie, and Walter Petty next Margaret; Ann feeling a little ashamed and altogether proud, at having, as she thought, taken away the other's young man; while Walter, poor lad, confronted Peter in triumph. His fortunes, he felt, were mending. The two mothers cast glances of wrathful scorn at each other between the legs of the black waiters running assiduously round within the ring. It was the only amusement open to them at their time of life, in the intervals between plying knife and fork.

Margaret, looking over the people's heads, descried far away the manly form she most desired to see. Her plot was going to work, but meanwhile she must take care to lull suspicion in her mother's mind. The way to do that was being civil to her companion. She exerted herself and made the poor lad really happy--feeling ashamed and burdened the while, at her appalling treachery, and really sorry for the young fellow, who was so kind and nice, and who admired her so openly.

At length the repast was ended. Everybody had eaten as many clams as seemed expedient.

The company rose up and sauntered away, leaving the waiters free to clear off the relics of the feast. Joseph took Rose's arm and drifted apart from the rest as quietly as he could contrive. It was not to eat shell-fish in public that he had consented to dine uncomfortably on a sandheap. Rose would have been content to be less exclusively private, and looked round to see if she could not beckon Margaret to join them; but Margaret, between Walter Petty and her mother, was walking another way, so she accepted the inevitable with a good grace, and strove to interest herself in her companion. A few wind-bent trees maintained a struggling existence not far off upon a slope of sun-parched turf coming down upon the shore, with morsels of grateful shade; and thither they bent their steps.

"I am glad *that* part of the enjoyment is through," Joseph was saying. "It gives one cramps all over, that sitting on the ground all crumpled up, and eating things. But apparently there must be eating, if it is a party of pleasure."

"Please, sir, there is a parcel for you at the kitchen tent--sent on as you ordered. The man says you must sign a receipt." It was a waiter who spoke, puffing and fanning his shining black face, and grinning with all his teeth, while he held his hand convenient for the expected tip.

"Ha! Come, has it?" and Joseph smiled in return, slipping the dollars in the ready palm, and dismissing the messenger well pleased.

"Let me settle you comfortably beneath yon tree, dearest; and then will you excuse me till I run after the fellow? I shall not be a minute gone. You will wait for me there, will you not?"

"Go back at once; I can do that much for myself, and will wait there as you say."

And so they parted, Joseph making all haste in one direction, while Rose walked leisurely forward in the other. She had almost reached the trees, her sunshade open before her, her eyes upon the sand.

"At last!" and a figure stood between her and the light. "I have been waiting, Rose, for a chance like this."

Rose started at the voice. A thrill ran through her, and the sunshade fell aside, as though the arm which held it were benumbed. Immediately in front of her stood Gilbert Roe. The flaming red and white chased one another across her face, but her eye looked steadily in his.

"Sir!" she cried, with indignant emphasis; but she said no more, her lips closed tightly, and her eyebrows straightened in a frown.

"They tell me you are going to be married, Rose? You must hear me this once. I am resolved to have it out with you."

She threw back her head, and her nostrils quivered in pride. The angry blood suffused her temples now; there was no paleness and no sign of fear. "Allow me to pass," she answered, haughtily.

"Not till you hear me, Rose. I mean to save you from yourself."

"What right have you to interfere with me?"

"The strongest; the right of one who loves you."

"You have *no* right! The law denies it. It gives me freedom. You shall not interfere."

"Calm yourself, Rose. I cannot live without you. And more, you never will be happy but with me."

"Bah! you are too long of finding it out. I am free, and I shall keep my liberty as far as you are concerned. I have tried you, and know you to my cost. It is over now. The law has cried quits between us."

"It cannot, Rose! Think of the old time in Canada!--the evenings when we sang together, and talked in the porch--the walks between the corn-fields--the afternoons in the orchard--and the promises we made. Can you ever forget them?"

"How dare you remind me of them? Have you no decent shame? You might wish the ground to open and let you through, rather than hear those old days named, and be reminded how you have outraged a trusting girl!"

"I have been true to my vows, Rose. I make no merit of it; I could not have been otherwise. It was my glory and delight to fulfil them."

"And you did it admirably! certainly. It was in fulfilment of them, I suppose, that you made fierce love to that silly Horatia Simpkins, under my very nose, and before the eyes of her own husband? If it had even been a handsome woman, or one not absolutely a fool, the slight might have been less unpardonable. But with her!"

"What else could I have done?--the way you went on with her husband--that conceited ass Rupert. Would you have had me stand by, like a gawk, with my thumb in my mouth, assenting to your outrageous flirtation, which nearly drove his poor little silly wife out of her wits with jealousy? She is not as clever, perhaps, as you are, but at least she is fond of her husband!"

Rose coughed impatiently and stamped her foot. The adversary must be admitted to have scored one by that thrust.

"Is a woman to give up the amusements of social life--the little conventional pleasantnesses of society--because she happens to have lent a too trusting ear, and yielded to the man who wanted to marry her? Does she grow plain and old and stupid from the day she becomes a wife? Is she no more to find pleasure in being liked and admired? Life is not over when she comes back from church: she is still as human as she was before--wants a little of the diversions she has learnt to like, and needs a continuance of the devotion her suitor taught her to expect. You are hideously jealous, Gilbert. You should have been born a Turk, with a harem built out in the back-yard, beside the chicken-house, to lock up your wife in."

It was the first time she had used his name. Gilbert noted it and took courage.

"You know you wanted me to be jealous when you took up with that ninny--and you wanted to tease his wife. You succeeded. She thought you had stolen her husband's affection--or what represents it, in him--and she was not going to submit quietly to the robbery. She thought to make reprisals, and so laid siege to your husband in return. I am not sure but she got the revenge she wanted. You cannot deny that you were absurdly jealous."

"Absurdly? Yes; laugh at me! I deserve it for allowing you to address me. You consider me a fool. You have said as much before, and you said other things as well, which were even worse. You insulted me with suspicion, and used expressions as if I were improper. You know you did! Bertie Roe!... You never loved me really, I do believe--not as you made me expect you would--not as a girl should be loved, who gives up her life and everything to be married to a man. You behaved like a barbarian! Deny it if you dare!"

"I do deny it, Rose. Could I stand by and see you play the fool with a contemptible duffer, before the eyes of all Chicago?--see people in ball-rooms and theatres follow you with their eyes, nudge each other, and exchange glances, and shrug, as if to say, 'another young wife taking the turn downhill'?"

"You are insulting!--but I might have expected it. 'Cruelty and desertion' were the words in the decree."

"I dare you to lay your hand upon your heart and say that I was cruel. I merely remonstrated--and then you scolded.... You know you did, Rose. You made home unbearable. I had to leave the house."

"You outraged my feelings. Was I to accept your insinuations of improper conduct as a polite compliment, or an everyday commonplace of domestic conversation?... You did not strike me, I admit--the man in you would restrain you from that; but you did worse!--the things you said."

"Could I see people taking away your character by a shrug without giving you warning? Could I tell you about it, as something amusing and to your credit?"

"It was yourself who goaded me on to do whatever I did. And then to insult and desert me!"

"I did not desert you. I merely took rooms down town, leaving you in sole possession of the house until you should come to your senses.... You did not believe that I had deserted you; but you wanted to make me beg pardon and come back as if I had been to blame."

"And so you *were* to blame! The Court has decided that, and granted me my divorce."

"And has your divorce, then, made you happy? Would you have filed your petition, if you had expected to have it granted? You thought I would have come and prayed you to withdraw it. I let you take your course. Was I wrong?"

"You knew you had no defence--had no case to plead--that I was right. You let judgment go by default."

"Did you imagine that I would plead?--have all our little altercations, which would have sounded so pitiful in Court, raked out and exposed before a crew of newspaper reporters, to be read and chuckled over by the people going home in the tram-cars? Did you imagine that I would attempt to keep you bound, if you wanted to break loose from the marriage tie? I would not have you, if I could, against your will."

"You are very magnanimous, and I--of course I am the opposite--everything bad, and frivolous, and foolish. I wonder you should have troubled yourself to address against her will so poor a creature."

"I have been waiting here all these days, Rose, in hopes of getting speech of you. You are not

bad, or frivolous, or foolish. You are the only woman I have ever cared for, or ever shall. We have been--not very wise, shall I call it?--headstrong and obstinate, and neither would give in; and both, if I may venture to say it, have been miserable in consequence. Forget and forgive, Rose. Let's try again, begin the game anew, and profit by sad experience. It is for that I have been waiting here--to prevent this marriage of yours, if the people say true, which will make both you and me miserable for ever."

"You are kind; but do you not exaggerate? My marriage at least will not leave you inconsolable. You have secured the consoler already. I wish you joy of her. May she make you as happy as you deserve, and----" But here, to her own astonishment--for Rose had felt proud of her bravery and calmness throughout the interview--there came a spasm in her throat, which choked her utterance. The corners of her mouth began to droop, and her eyes sought the ground.

"Do you mean Maida Springer? This is worse than Horatia Simpkins! I am sure I have not flirted with Maida. Come, if you like, and ask her; she is sitting under that tree. She is an acquaintance of very old standing; that is all. She taught my uncle's children long ago, when I was a lad. We saw each other constantly when I was home from Harvard at the vacation. But there is nothing between us--never was. Come, ask her yourself. She is sitting behind this nearest tree: she will be the first to wish us joy."

He took Rose's hand to lead her to the spot, and Rose had moved a step or two before she had recovered self-command enough to resist. The tree was very close. Whoever sat behind it must have overheard the conversation, for both had been too intent to keep their voices low. Rose shrank from meeting the listener. She stopped short, and looked timidly where the eavesdropper was said to be.

There seemed little which need make her feel uneasy. A woman's figure--or was it only a bundle of summer clothing? so limp and collapsed it seemed--lay crouched and huddled together against the bole. The hat was pushed aside, the head bowed between the knees, and two slender hands spread out before it to exclude the light. The hair had come unfastened, and fell in wisps down to the ground, swaying and quivering in the sobbing tremor which shook the woman's frame.

Rose drew away her hand. "It is too late to talk, Bertie. We have chosen our roads in life, and we must keep them. But we will think more kindly of one another now. I am engaged, as you know. I did it freely, and I must keep my word. I will not spoil the life of another--of a man who is as fond of me as this one, and so good and true. We will forgive one another--will we not?--and learn from sad experience more forbearance in our future lots. There he is coming. I shall go and meet him. Goodbye. We must not meet again."

She went, leaving Gilbert elated at his success, but dissatisfied with its incompleteness, and a little doubtful how he ought to return to Maida Springer. They had been reclining rather aimlessly behind the tree, when he looked up and saw Rose almost upon them, and alone. It seemed to be now or never, if he was to have speech with her. He bounded to his feet without a word to his companion, and her own ears must soon have told her why. It felt decidedly awkward to return to Maida; yet what was he to do? He could not follow Rose without imperilling such way as he had made back to her favour, by inducing perhaps an ugly scene with Naylor; and having brought Maida there, he must fetch her back to her friends. It was an uncomfortable task, but it had to be performed. He hardened his soul, expecting to hear something unpleasant, composed his features, and turned round to the tree.

He might have spared his anxiety. The tree was deserted. No one was near. Far up the slope the flutter of a white gown and streaming blue veil might be discerned between the trees, in swift retreat, and Gilbert found that Maida had saved him the unpleasantness of an explanation.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"IT IS ALL A MESS!"

It fell hard upon Rose to have to meet Joseph again so immediately after the passage she had gone through with Gilbert Roe--to pass, with scarce a pause in which to brace herself together, from the lover of her youth into the presence of the man to whom she had chosen to transfer her regard. She had fooled herself in her pique into the belief that she had trodden down and stamped out the last spark of kindness for the husband who had been, as she told herself, so hard and cruel and insulting--the man who could let her untie their marriage bond, without showing a sign or offering a word of remonstrance. He was nothing to her now--she had been saying it

within herself ever since their separation--or if anything, only her aversion. She had been persuading herself that she was an injured woman, and that it was righteous resentment which she had been nursing against the unfeeling tyrant who had blighted her early wifehood. She had resolved that she would never speak to him again, nor even name him; that she would pluck out the very memory of her first and foolish love--have done with him for ever, and begin anew. (As if our past, the foundation of our present, could ever be obliterated!)

When he forced himself upon her so unexpectedly, the anger smouldering through her year of unmolested separation, the regret and disappointment grown sour in concealment and suppression, and turned by silence and defeated pride into what had seemed an inextinguishable hatred, had burst into a flame of fiercest indignation. It had burst into flame, but how pitifully soon it had burnt low! It had been but a fire of straw, blazing up for a moment and sinking as quickly as it rose; leaving nothing behind, nothing but the emptiness of separation. The grievances and wrongs and barriers piled up so high between them, where were they gone to? Vanished utterly away. There had been a leaping flame and a whirling puff of smoke, and the ground was clear between them--clear save for the ashes of happiness destroyed for ever! And there she stood, naked and exposed before her own eyes and his, stripped of her false pretexts, a vain and headstrong fool, who in very wantonness had made bonfire of their wedded happiness!

And yet her indignation had seemed so just, her wrongs so deep and unforgivable! How speedily her wrath had oozed away before a few words! words not of contrition, scarce even of reproach, but only common-sense, and spoken by the old dear voice! Where were the bitter memories now? How could she be so false to herself? Where was her pride?--that stanch support against which she had been wont to set her back, ready to outface the world? It had bent and broken, like a worthless reed, before a few words of the man against whom she had invoked its aid. "Bertie!" She had resolved to obliterate the memory of that name; and yet it had passed her lips, and the old caressing sweetness of the sound was in her ears, and would not go away.

It was not half an hour since the mere sight of him had hardened her with hate, and made her feel strong, if yet unhappy. Now, she was weak as water. If she had stayed, she would have given way and yielded--she could not tell to what--but to anything the old sweet strong influence in that voice had chosen to command her. But she had escaped, and she was still free, and she would keep her liberty, whatever it might cost her peace. At least she thought so.

What would they say, those sympathising friends who had come to her in her conflict, with their well-meant phrases of support, and told her she had done so wisely, and shown so brave a spirit? What would they say to see her lower the lance and go back again to the bondage of her tyrant? How could she face their pity at her weakness? And then there were the others, who had disapproved of her conduct--had advised her to submit, yield something, and make it up; and when she would not, had turned away from knowing her. They would call her repentant, and perhaps would turn again to countenance her reformation! That would be more intolerable even than the pitying surprise of her stancher friends. No; she must follow out the road she had entered on. There could be no returning upon the lost steps. And she had so nearly yielded. It startled her to find she was so weak. She must build a barrier between the old life and the new, which could neither be surmounted nor thrown down.

Joseph was close upon her now. He had not been very long away, but he did not seem in her eyes exactly as he had seemed before. It was not half an hour that he had been gone, yet he looked more ordinary than she had supposed him. The redundancy of waistcoat, or rather of waist, offended her sense of symmetry as it had not done before; and if he had been just a little taller! Bertie was six-feet-one, and gracefully slim, and chestnut-haired, while the other's locks were darkening, as the leaves grow dark before the autumn tints begin to light them up with the rustiness that comes before decay. It was the difference between thirty and forty-seven. What a fool she was to notice such things, and at such a time, when the very contrary was what she would have wished to notice! She told herself so with vehemence, and bit her lip, as if that would make her mind it better; but she went on noticing all the same. When the eye has been turned for a little on the sun, what a poor, dim, purblind thing does the light of a candle afterwards appear!

Joseph came on with swinging elastic strides, impatient to be with her, irradiated with a joyful pride, and beaming on her with smiles of confidence irrepressible.

"If he would only have been tranquil!" she thought. This exuberance seemed so utterly out of place. It was a discord in the bland and half-parental warmth which, she told herself, would have been correct in view of their disparity of age. "It was bad taste. There was even an element of ridicule in a venerable Cupid of forty-seven exerting himself to gambol before her like one of those boy Loves with wings the artists picture. She had not thought so half an hour ago, but we live and change so quickly at times. He was too solid for that sort of thing, and she felt sorry to see him attempt it, for she really respected and liked him."

"You grew tired of waiting, Rose?"

"Why would he call her by her name just then?" she asked herself, forgetting that he had been doing so habitually for a week past, and that she had encouraged him to do it.

"And came to meet me? Forgive me, dearest. I could not help it. Your own disinclination to be kept waiting, must plead for my impatience to get my little parcel, that I might present it. I made

the hotel people promise to send it after us, if it should arrive this forenoon. It has come, but the express man would not part with it till I had signed the receipt. Then the rascal went to refresh himself, and I had quite a hunt to find him. However, it is all right now. Shall we turn back and get under the shadow of the trees?"

"As you like," Rose answered, a little dully.

Joseph tore off the wrappings of his parcel as they walked along, laying bare the little ring-case. He opened it, and the merry little stones within, catching the sunbeams, cast them back in a dazzling gleam beyond his expectation.

Rose saw and shuddered. The glancing ray seemed to pierce her with a cold sharp pang, like the thrust of steel. It was the token of her engagement; and that, of a sudden, and without her being aware of an alteration in her mind, had grown distasteful.

"And now, my dearest, will you let me fit it in its place. It is not worthy your acceptance; but then, what is? Still it is pretty, is it not? And seeing that you were kind enough to accept myself, you will let me slip on my ring. It is an earnest of the other you have promised to let me give you."

"Not now, Mr----dear Joseph, I mean." How unreadily his name came to her lips! and half an hour since she had used it freely--had even liked to use it in a very friendly way, as leading up to the more intimate connection which was to be established between them. What a rift between the now and then!

"Do you not like it, dear?" Joseph asked, in a disappointed tone. "I said it was not worthy either of your acceptance or of my love; but still, I confess I thought it pretty, and I hoped you would have worn it."

"Oh, as to that--yes, by all means. It is a lovely ring, the very handsomest I ever saw. Any one might feel proud to wear it on its own merits; but you know how whimsical we women are. It is a whim which I have taken, that I will not put on a ring to-day."

"Let me persuade you out of it, dearest. Let me overbear the whim." He took her hand in his, drew off the glove, and reverently pressed his lips upon the fingers, while she stood looking listlessly and sadly in his face. He took the engagement-finger and attempted to slip on the ring without more ado; but at the touch of it Rose started and drew away her hand with a shrinking cry, while Joseph strove to retain it, and still attempted to slip on the ring.

"It must not be, at least not yet a while, Joseph. I have something which I must tell you, that will make a difference between us. It would be unfair to you not to tell you in time, what may influence your feelings with regard to an engagement between us. And meanwhile, I give you back your promise, that you may be free to do as you will, after you have heard me."

"You shall not give it back, Rose. I will not accept it. And more, I hold *you* to your promise still. Nothing which you can tell me will induce me to give you back yours."

"Not if you heard dreadful things against me?"

"I would not believe them. I know you too well for that. What do you take me for?"

"I take you for a noble-minded man. It is that which troubles me. I am not worth your caring for."

"You are my own, a part of my very self."

"You would not say so if you knew--that I have been married before!--if you were told that I am a divorced woman!"

"I would not believe them."

"But it is true."

"What a villain the man must have been!--what a fool!--to cast away the flower he was unworthy to have worn! But, my poor darling, if this is so, you have the deeper need of my protecting care."

"But it was I who divorced--him!"

"You have been cruelly used, then. Ah, what you must have suffered! It shall be all the more my care to make you forget your unhappiness. Forget it you shall. Let's say no more about it."

"But I must. You do not know how poor a thing you have anchored your heart to--how fickle and headstrong and vain a creature I have been! I petitioned for a divorce from my husband."

"And you got it. Is not that a proof that you were in the right?--when the law granted your demand? What you must have come through! But it shall be mine to make you forget."

"He--filed no rejoinder, as they call it He let the law take its course."

"He did not, because he could not. The law has relieved you from an unworthy mate. Forget it, my poor darling. Forget *him*. We have the future before us. Forget all the past."

"He refused to plead; but I am not so sure that he could not have pleaded successfully if he had chosen to do it. My petition was an outrage to him."

"Do not think it. A woman is not driven to take such a step without sufficient grounds."

"That is what the judge said; but--ah me!--I do not know."

"What has called up these morbid fancies in your mind, Rose? You were cheerful an hour ago."

"He--has spoken to me. When you were gone he came to me--and things seem different now. I am not so sure that I was right, as I used to be."

"The sneaking villain! Who is he? Where is he? To come molesting the woman he has wronged, so soon as my back was turned! Kicking is too good for such a hound. Where is he?"

"You must not ask. What would people say of me, if you and he were to meet?... But I am upset; my head is splitting. I do not know what I am saying, or what I do. I will go back to the village inn and lie down."

"We can drive back to Clam Beach. No one will miss us. Come."

"I want to be alone, and think. Do not come with me. Yonder is Lettice Deane; bring me to her, and then let me leave you."

Lettice was following her own amusement in her own way. She was holding a kind of auction of her smiles as she walked upon the sands between Mr Sefton and Peter Wilkie, who vied with each other to engross her attention, flashing speeches across her, to her infinite diversion, in their efforts to extinguish one another. It was amusing, but she cared nothing for either, and was mischievously ready to disgust them both alike, by yielding to Rose's petition for her company back to the village.

"Is your head *very* bad, Rose, dear?" she asked, full of sympathy, as soon as they were alone. "It must be, to take you away from him so soon after his present. Or is it a sort of necessary discipline?--in case of his growing too confident on the head of it? Let me see it. Everybody knows that the express man was sent after you here. What! you have not put it on yet? I declare, I think you are rigorous. You owed him the satisfaction of seeing you wear it, I think, seeing how much it cost."

"I have not got it. I could not accept it to-day. I have been trying to have an explanation and tell him everything. He--the other--dropped upon me suddenly when I was alone and not expecting him, and we talked--and, oh Lettice! I am in a maze. What am I to do? It seems to be I won't and I will with me, all the time. I can't do both, and I won't do either. I am distracted, Lettice. I must go to bed and try to think."

"Who-o-o----!" Lettice could not whistle as some girls can; but that long-drawn masculine expression of--of everything at once--of the fat having fallen in the fire, with general loss, trouble, and confusion, seemed the only adequate and appropriate one for the occasion, and she framed her lips and voice to the nearest equivalent.

"And what will you do, dear?" she said, after a considerable pause.

"Don't bother me with questions, Lettie. I do not know in the very least. I shall go to bed, and try to sleep, and to forget everything. If one could only forget for always! How good it would be! I am in a mess. And all from having my way, and getting everything I thought I wanted. It is all a mess! an irretrievable muddle. Whatever I may do, it will be sure to be wrong. Oh Lettie! take warning in time; and don't let your little tempers run away with you, as mine have done with me."

CHAPTER XXX.

A CLOSE OBSERVER.

When Rose and Lettice went their way, the three cavaliers found their occupation gone. They

stood an instant looking after the retreating fair, then turned to face one another; but there was no satisfaction in view of the witnesses of their discomfiture--each felt small, rather, and perhaps a little ridiculous. The only plaster for their grazed self-love was absence from the witnesses; and accordingly each turned on his heel, going off in quest of some new interest, and diverging as widely from the other two as was possible.

Joseph strolled despondently back toward the stunted grove, to which twice already he had bent his steps, but had not reached. He had borne up bravely enough under Rose's disclosure at the moment. In the thick of the fight one generally does bear up. The excitement of combat stirs the blood, and blows fall scarcely heeded on him who struggles hard to have his way. It is when the battle is over, that the wounds begin to smart, when the stricken have leisure to feel them. And Joseph was wounded sore. It crushed him to think that anything could be said in derogation of the peerless one whom he had found to fit into' the long-vacant shrine, where the beloved of his youth had sat, and whose memory, still hovering there, had made it a holy place. There seemed impiety in associating the new avatar of his love with the ribald vulgarities of the divorce court, in dragging the blossom of his worship through its noisome mire. Yet was she the less precious because her lines had fallen haplessly? Does a jewel lose worth for having fallen in the kennel? He told himself this, and repeated it over and over. He vowed that her need of sympathy and support, was a claim the more upon his honour, and that the claim should be satisfied; but still it was painful to think that the name of his wife to be, had been bandied from mouth to mouth as one of the motley crew who shock chaste ears with their clamour to be relieved from obligations which if was their own free choice to undertake. It dimmed the bright promise of that future in which he had been basking so unsuspiciously, but it should not appal him. He would steadfastly look forward to all being well; his own faith and hope would of themselves contribute to a happy consummation; and for Rose, how much she must have suffered!--how much she needed him!

He had reached the grove at last. His feet were on the turf, and he was strolling upwards through the trees, buried in deep and not too sweet reflections.

"Alone, Joseph?" There was much in the tone to irritate. It contained a suggestion of pity, combined with the "I thought as much," or "I told you so," with which intimate friends are wont to rub up our little sorenesses, and make them smart. It was his sister-in-law who spoke--Susan--who already had expressed her disapproval of his intended change in life, and who could not be expected to regret any little unsmoothness in the current of his love. She had risen from a corner of shade in which she had been encouraging the faltering advances of Walter Petty to closer intimacy with her girl Margaret. The two seemed fairly well tackled in conversation, now, and she felt free to devote a little attention to Joseph and his concerns. She took his arm, and accommodated her pace to his for a little turn, ignoring the sudden tightening of his features into an impatient frown.

"'The course of true love,' &c.--you know the rest, Joseph. Where there is disparity, one must be prepared for little *contretemps*. One cannot expect young girls to accommodate themselves at once to the steady jog-trot of their seniors. They would not be so attractive, I daresay, if one could. She certainly----"

"What are you talking about, Susan?"

"You do not know, eh? Or rather you think I do not know? I have seen everything--more than you have yourself. I was sitting up here in the shade, when you were called away a while ago."

"Yes, I was called away. It was annoying, I confess; but I got back when I had completed my little matter of business. I see nothing in that which calls for your condolence."

"Of course not, dear Joseph. It was far too cleverly arranged for that. She certainly is clever--an accomplished actress. I only hope it may answer, and that you may not find her out to be too clever by half. A good many people have seen as well as me. It was very well done--quite dramatic, in fact; or rather, pantomimic--for they were far too judicious to raise their voices and be overheard."

"Enough, Susan. I detest insinuations. Who are they whose private affairs you have been watching and prying into? Do you know that you have been accusing yourself of eavesdropping, mitigated only by your inability to hear what was said? It is scarcely the pursuit I should have expected a ladylike person to take up."

"You are rude, Joseph; but I forgive you. One must not expect people to accept disenchantment with an equable mind."

"You speak riddles. I am in no mood for guessing them."

"Just what I say. You are upset, Joseph, and I am truly sorry."

"I am not upset. I am perfectly well and happy, Susan. It is you who are absurd. You have your girls' hands to dispose of. It is occupation enough for any woman. See you do it wisely; and leave me to bestow my own in peace. I decline your interference."

"You are blind, Joseph. There are a score of people in this wood. Every one of them must have

seen. It is only you, the one who ought to know, who have not, and do not know. I insist on telling you. You may not like it, but it is my duty."

"Always a duty--when a woman wants to be provoking."

"I forgive the gibe. The young person you have chosen to devote yourself to, has a lover."

"Certainly. The lady you stigmatise as a person has me; and I mean to marry her."

"You and another. Ha! you did not know that! I can read it in your face. Your back was scarcely turned, when out there bounced from behind a tree--a man!--that tall slim young fellow you must have noticed at the Beach any time this last week. He has been devoting himself to that little spare woman with the blue veil whom nobody seems to mind. People said they were engaged, and wondered at one with his good looks bestowing himself so cheaply. Well, as I was saying, out he bounced upon Miss--what's her name?--Miss Hillyard; and I can tell you their interview was an animated one. How the colour of both came and went! There must a great deal have taken place between them. How he gesticulated! She was comparatively calm. He is an ardent fellow, I can tell you, Joseph. Better have an eye on him."

Joseph did not know exactly what to say. He felt himself disloyal in listening; but still he was interested, and if he waited to hear more, he fancied he should be better able to defend Rose.

"The lady he had left--her with the blue veil--seemed to take her squire's sudden desertion in very bad part. She started and looked shocked at his departure, then bent forward where she sat, and looked, and listened. They were within a few yards of her, and she must have heard all that passed. The disillusion must have been terrible. I saw her head bow lower and lower, as though all fortitude were deserting her; and soon she seemed utterly crushed. She buried her head in her lap, and clasped her hands above it--a most pitiable spectacle.

"But that was not the worst. He certainly must be a man without pity or a spark of feeling. He actually had the cruelty to lead the other a little to one side, where she could have a view of the discarded rival. Was it not barbarous? This was too much for the other. It stung her into something like proper self-respect. As soon as the other turned away--and I will do the Hillyard girl the justice to say that she betrayed no sign of gratification at her rival's confusion--she jumped to her feet with a little cry, tied on her hat, and ran away up the hill, as if to hide herself among the trees. Then Miss Rose seemed suddenly to remember about you. She dismissed her admirer with the peremptory assurance of an old hand, who knows exactly what she means to do, and strolled calmly across the sands to meet you coming back to her. She must have managed very well. I saw her leaning on your arm as friendly as possible--a clever girl, but a sad handful, I should imagine, for the man whose doubtful fortune it may be to get her for a wife."

"And now you have done, Susan, with your romance? Let me congratulate you on your talent for 'putting that and that together,' and producing a coherent fiction from true premisses, which might do credit to the author of the 'Arabian Nights.'"

"And pray, if the premisses are true, and nothing of my own is added, how can you venture to suppose that my inferences are astray? You are infatuated, Joseph Naylor."

"My good creature, the young lady has told me of this interview with the tall young man which you have described so graphically. It must indeed have been exciting and full of emotion, but you have entirely failed to catch its true import; and, as far as I can see, there is no reason why you should understand it, either you or any of the twenty other eavesdroppers you mention, who have been gratuitously interesting themselves in what does not concern them. Miss Hillyard is suffering from violent headache in consequence of what occurred, and has returned to the village to lie down. On second thoughts, I believe I shall follow her, and try if she will not let me drive her back to the Beach at once. That will be better than encountering the twenty pairs of curious eyes during the evening, who will want to watch her every movement, and piece a romance out of every time she looks at her watch. Goodbye, Susan. Accept thanks for kind intentions on my account; but do, pray, be more charitable in future. Good-bye, Margaret. I am going back at once, and shall be asleep when you get home. Kiss me good-night, child."

Margaret rose to pay the dutiful salute. Joseph kissed her on the cheek, and finding his lips so conveniently near her ear, he whispered--

"Walter's buggy will be the first in the line. He will be waiting. Get down before the others. Jump in; and God bless you!"

Margaret changed colour violently. Her mother, looking on, was surprised to see an embrace from an old uncle, produce signs of emotion. "It must be because of the young man sitting by," she thought sapiently, and drew happy auguries from the circumstance. Those close observers are so often astray!

When Joseph reached the inn at Blue Fish Creek, he sent up a little note to Rose, asking if she would not rather come home now in quiet, than wait through the racket of the evening, to be followed by a riotous journey after dark with the rest in their overflowing high spirits. Rose consented, and they drove home forthwith.

How different were Joseph's feelings now, from what they had been in the morning! Then, everything was bathed in sunshine and hope. The bare supposition that aught could go amiss did not once cross his mind. Now, he could not say what had befallen him, but a cloud had come down and enveloped him, and blotted out the future, and every certainty from his view, chilling his hopes and even his desires as with an untimely frost. The ring lay forgotten in his pocket. It did not occur to him to offer it again. If he had, the probability is that it would have been accepted, though perhaps without the enthusiasm which would have made the acceptance of value in his eyes.

Another phase of feeling had arisen in Rose's mind since her walk with Lettice. Her friend had betrayed a presentiment, that now Gilbert had had speech of her, he would win her back; and Rose revolted at the idea of figuring before her friends as a repentant naughty child. No; she had made her choice, and she would show that she could hold to it. She might not be happy in the future, but at least she could be steadfast. And truly, the man beside her as she drove, so truthful and so good, deserved all the duty and devotion she could devote to him. If she did not love as once she might have loved, at least he should never know it. She would be but the more dutiful on that account; she would even--what seemed the hardest thing of all to her headstrong nature--even obey him.

She was very near to him then, if Joseph had but known; but he did not. The old doubleness between his wife of long ago, and this heir to her place in his regard, had arisen anew within him, and it was still the older god who held the shrine. He felt regretfully tender and considerate to his companion by his side, but the enthusiasm of the morning was wanting.

They spoke little to one another as they travelled along. Rose was pale and had a splitting headache, and Joseph was consideration itself. He forbore to disturb her, assisted her to alight when they arrived at Clam Beach, and expressed a hope that she would be better in the morning, when they parted and she went up-stairs.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LADY PRINCIPAL.

The Principal of the Female College of Montpelier sat in her room--office, call it, or study--her seat of authority, absorbed in business. Her table was littered with papers; the waste-paper basket overflowed with them. There was ink before her, a pen in her hand. Her cap sat crooked on her head; her whitened hair was rumpled. The too active cerebration within had no doubt disturbed the external trimness of her dome of thought, as phrenologists used to tell us that it worked ridges and hollows in the bones of the skull. She was deep in thought. Her grey, intellectual features were tightened in the effort, and her eye roved vacantly in space in search of those choice forms which had long made her style the model of literary expression in Montpelier.

She had spent the morning in compounding a syllabus, or a compendium--matters in the manufacture of which she was unrivalled. Now she was considering her address on female self-culture, shortly to be delivered before the Institute of Emancipated Woman, with a list of the hundred books which should form the inseparable companions of every female aspirant to Breadth of View. Her eye wandered to the terrestrial globe at her elbow--a symbol of her learned office, handed down from her predecessors in more simple-minded times; and she reviewed the distinguished literary reputations in remote places and times--the less vulgarly popular or comprehensible, the better for her purpose.

Ha! there was the Nile--Egypt--Manetho! A most respectable name Manetho, and not too much said about him. The only difficulty was, were his works extant? She was not sure, and her encyclopædia was too old an edition to make it worth while looking up. Her eye moved eastward: India? *eureka!* The Rig Veda,--Max Müller and the 'Asiatic Review'! She had read all about it in Littel's 'Living Age,' the pirate's treasure-house.

The Rig Veda should head her list. She had not read it, to be sure; but neither had those whom she addressed, and they would not be able to read it, if they were to try--in the original, at least, and she intended to pour scorn upon the use of translations; but it looked well at the head of a list, showed comprehensiveness in the lecturer, and ensured respect from the omniscient critic of the 'Montpelier Review.'

The 'Zend-Avesta' made a handsome second; but as she did not desire to smother her audience under the load of erudition, she considerately offered it as an alternative to the Rig Veda. "A Saga" came next--she did not specify which. Her familiarity with Scandinavian literature was not

intimate enough to particularise; but as not one of her audience would know anything about it, that made little difference. Being minded that nothing she said should savour of the too familiar, she gave Klopstock the first place in her German list rather than Goethe; and for the same reason Marlowe led off her English dramatists, with Shakespeare far down among the ruck. Then there were Hegel and Haekel, with permission to add the 'Critique of Pure Reason' for those who relished intellectual nut-cracking. There was to have been a name or two from every tribe and tongue in Europe; but in her ignorance she could think of no Russian but Turguenief; and when she came to the Lapps, Finns, Liths, and Basques, they had no literary representative whom she had ever heard of. After that she took up a publisher's list and filled up the remaining sixty places at random. What did it matter? People would read what they liked or understood. If they did not understand, it could not influence them one way or other. She knew as well as you or I do, reader, that wheat is not grown on pure sand; that loams, clays, moulds, each produce a vegetation limited by their capacity; that everything will not grow everywhere, and that, if it could, it would not be worth much. But while the public laboured under the fad of comprehensiveness, she recognised that she, its servant, must be comprehensive too, or her employer would pay her off and get some one else who was up to its standard. No one person could read, or, if they could, would care to read, a tenth part of the literature upon her list; but that she considered the one useful element in what she was about. It introduced a moral influence. It would keep her audience humble--an end not always easy to achieve where that audience is feminine, and more richly endowed with aspiration than with solid learning--and show them how much there still was which they did not know, notwithstanding their acquirements.

There came a timid knock at the door, and a second, which the Principal heard; and laying down her pen she sat bolt-upright and said, "Come in."

It was Maida Springer who entered.

At the sight of her subordinate looking crushed and wan, the Principal's aspect softened. Her impatience of interruption gave place to those motherly instincts which nestled sweet and fresh about her heart, though usually sheltered and concealed from an uncongenial world under the dry husk of her superior-woman-hood.

"You--Maida?... I had almost given up hope of seeing you again. But have you been sick? You do not look much benefited by your stay at the shore--rather the other way."

Maida looked down. "I am well, Miss Rolph. I arrived by the night-train. I suppose that accounts for my--for my want of looks," and she sighed; but more for the want of looks, than for herself.

"Did my letter miscarry? It is nearly a fortnight since I wrote."

Maida coloured. "I got it, Miss Rolph, and I am come to thank you. I know I should have written at once; but--I meant to come instead. Indeed I started, but--when----" Her voice died away. She looked down more than she had done before, and her colour deepened.

"What was it, my dear? What prevented your coming?"

Maida lifted her head, drew a long breath, and raised her eyes to Miss Rolph's face. Then the impossibility of uttering what there was to tell arose before her. She bowed her head till the hat-brim and the wisp of blue veil came down between her eyes and those of the Principal. She strained down her arms before her, locked the fingers of both hands together, and was speechless.

Miss Rolph was scarcely pleased that her kindly meant interest should be put aside; but she was not the woman to obtrude unwelcome sympathy. She stiffened back to business, and observed with manifest coldness of voice--

"Your neglect may prove prejudicial to your interests, I fear; though perhaps not. It would have been great advancement for you, and quite a distinguished position, if you had been able to give the course on political economy and sociology. You would have been the first woman in this State to enter that important field. You would have made a name, and become a leader in our sex's emancipation. On the other hand, I admit that I felt a misgiving as to whether your character was yet sufficiently formed for the post. The long ages of woman's subordination have communicated a weakness of moral fibre to the individual of today, which it requires maturity of years, experience, and study, to overcome. I have feared at times that I detected some remains of the old-fashioned missishness in your character, not yet subdued. A year or two longer in your present duties may be advantageous. I have arranged with Dr Langenwoert from Boston to lecture three times a-week next term. After that--who knows?--but it depends on yourself. The Committee believes, as you are aware, that female education should be confided to women alone. You have been appointed a professorial assistant *pro tem*. to Dr Langenwoert. Avail yourself of your opportunities. Study his methods; and who knows but you may succeed him?"

"Oh, Miss Rolph, how good you are! Forgive my seeming thanklessness,--but, indeed--oh, Miss Rolph!"

Maida came forward and took the Principal's hand. Her voice was too tremulous to be trusted;

her eyes were brimming full. She had entered that room feeling so lonely, desolate, and without a friend; and here, in her professional chief, with whom her intercourse had been limited to what related to her duties, was a woman who cared for her, bestowed consideration, and was kind. She could have kissed the hand--she would fain have kissed the lips which had spoken to her kindly; but Miss Rolph was so very superior a woman, so above and beyond female weakness!--and what was that which she had said just now about *missish?*

Miss Rolph wheeled round on her pivoted chair, and looked with her clear, cool eyes in the other's face.

"Maida Springer, you are in trouble! Tell me what it is. Am not I a woman? Confide in me. I know you have no mother. I would try to advise you as she might have done, though perhaps I am not quite old enough for that."

She might have spared the last observation, being fifty-five, while Maida was but thirty; but, good lady, though undeniably superior, she was still a woman.

Maida's eyes overflowed. This was kindness unexpected.

"Take a chair, my dear. Draw up close to me, and tell me all." And when Maida drew close, she laid a hand upon her shoulder, and one soothingly upon the fingers wringing themselves into knots in perturbed irresolution.

"I would--I would! But how? I cannot speak of it!"

"When people have done no wrong, there is nothing they need fear to tell--to a friend. Injuries and mistakes often seem lessened when we can bring ourselves to speak about them. A burden shared presses with but half the weight it did before. Confide in me, Maida, Unburden your trouble."

Maida's tears flowed freely. She made no effort to restrain them. They softened the dry crust of misery which encased her spirit. Her head inclined to her consoler. So did her heart in tender gratitude. She caressed the soothing hand, but still the pent-up words refused to come. Miss Rolph waited in silence, but found at length that she must assist if the explanation was to be made.

"You said, Maida, that you intended to come instead of answering my letter--that you started?"

"I did. I was at Narwhal Junction waiting for the train, when I met a very old friend on the platform--going to Clam Beach, just as I was coming away. I could not resist going back with my old friend, it was so long since we had met. And after that, the matter of the sociology class escaped my memory."

"Very strange. Is Clam Beach a scene of such rackety dissipation that people forget their private affairs? I had inferred from your descriptions that it was quite retired--a place to rest in."

"My friend and I had not met for years. The meeting engrossed me."

Miss Rolph glanced in Maida's face, one sharp short glance, like an inquisitive bird, and with the flicker of a smile which did not spread beyond the corner of her mouth, inquired--

"And did--she?--your friend, take as engrossing an interest in you, my dear? Such friendships are rare, as well as precious."

"I did not say 'she,' Miss Rolph. It was a gentleman."

"I imagined as much, my dear; but you were so hampered by your noun of epicene gender, that I thought it best to be rid of it."

Maida blushed. "Oh, Miss Rolph! What will you think of me?--of my fitness as a pioneer in Woman's cause?"

"Think, my dear? That you are a woman like the rest of us. This was a feature in your nature that seemed missing. The absence of a universal weakness does not necessarily argue strength. It may arise from insensibility, and merely show an incomplete nature. I think better of you, perhaps. Go on."

"I had known him long ago. My first situation, when I began to teach, was in his uncle's house. He was a student at Harvard, but spent his vacations at home with us. His cousins were mere children; his uncle and aunt had their own affairs; I was his sole companion. He taught me much. It was a happy time. We were both young, fresh and hopeful, and--well---- He is the only young man I ever saw much of. He expected to make his fortune right away, and we---- But I cannot speak of it....

"That was ten years ago. We corresponded--for the first year or so. After that we lost sight of one another. I came to Montpelier; he--was making his fortune. He recognised me on the platform at Narwhal Junction. I was so pleased to find that he remembered me. He asked if I was married, and he told me that he was not. He went back with me to Clam Beach--or so I thought.

Perhaps I ought to put it the other way, and say that it was I who went with him; but at any rate we went together, and we were together there all the time. He knew nobody but myself, and he did not care to make acquaintances, it seemed; and he stayed on, though at first he had spoken of leaving in two days. And so it appeared to me--is there not some excuse for me, Miss Rolph?--that we were taking up our intimacy just where we had laid it down before."

"Ah!" said Miss Rolph. The bird-like look of the philosophic investigator had left her features now, and she was listening with genuine interest. She had still a heart, away down deep below her theories and professional fads, and there was perennial interest for her in a kindness between man and woman; which may have been unworthy of her position, but was as salt to preserve her nature sound and wholesome.

"What is his name, my dear? One follows a story so much better for knowing the names."

"Roe--Gilbert Roe. Has it not a pleasant sound?"

Miss Rolph's eyelids quivered in a momentary start. Then she looked down into her lap, compressing her lips, and making as if she would show no sign till all was told.

"He stayed on more than a week. He is there now, I daresay. He was with me constantly--sat beside me at table. People said it was a sure case, and congratulated me; and I--well--what else could I think? I believed them. Looking back now, with my insight cleared by what came after, I am bound to own that he said nothing in all that time. When I tried to hark back to the community of feeling that had subsisted between us long ago, he disregarded and passed it by. I am not accusing him of behaving badly, remember. It is my own foolish credulity alone which I have to blame; and oh, Miss Rolph, what humiliation it has brought on me! It hunted me away home here. I dared not, for shame, go back to Clam Beach, even to bring away my things."

"I do not follow."

"We went one day--it was yesterday, but it seems like years since, for the gulf of misery I have waded across since then. There was a clam-bake at Blue Fish Creek, and we were there. Everybody was there. We were sitting apart in a shady place, waiting till the heat would temper down. He was smoking or reading the paper, I forget which. All of a sudden he jumped up and left me. I looked round. He was addressing a lady who seemed unwilling to hear him. She tried to pass on without noticing him. She had taken no notice of him at the Beach, though they had been living under the same roof for a week. He persisted in accosting her, and angry words passed between them. She said she was free of him. He would not admit it."

"Who was the lady?"

"A Miss Hillyard of Chicago or somewhere. I am not acquainted with her."

"That is my niece! The Gilbert Roe you speak of must be her husband."

"Husband? Ah! that may explain the cruelty of what he did next. And it was cruel and humiliating to me! And there need have been no occasion for it, if he had told me at the first that he was married. She taunted him with my friendship. I heard her. And he--was it manly of him?--he actually proposed to bring her to me, to ask if there was anything between us more than old acquaintanceship!" Maida's voice rose into a cry as she said it. She clenched her hands; and cheeks, brow, neck, grew scarlet, and then she buried her face in her handkerchief and sobbed.

"It must be Rose, my niece, and her husband. I would believe anything that could be told me of them. There never were two such ill-regulated young things brought together, I do believe--so fond, so foolish, so obstinate and wayward. There never was such a fiasco as their married life has proved. Both handsome, both clever, both well off, and each, I believe, most truly attached to the other; yet neither would forbear to gratify a whim, neither would submit to be crossed in the smallest trifle by the other. They squabbled away for not much over a year, and then the Divorce Court came in and parted them. A pair of unruly children! It was whipped they should have been, and made promise to kiss and be friends. Instead of that, they are divorced and discredited for life, and nothing good need be expected ever to happen to either of them any more. These ill-considered changes in our customs are deplorable. It is good to rescue the downtrodden from oppression, but only evil can come of confounding liberty with licence."

"Perhaps you may be mistaken," Maida answered, looking up and drying her eyes. It consoled her to hear her affronters soundly scolded, even in their absence. "Hillyard is no such uncommon name. This lady passed for unmarried at the hotel, and they say she is engaged to be married to a gentleman from Canada. Yes, by the by, it was to remonstrate about that, that Mr Roe spoke to her."

"So the Divorce Court, even, does not end their squabbles! Whom was she said to be engaged to?"

"A Mr Naylor--a real nice gentleman, and devoted to her. Every one was talking about the beautiful presents of jewellery he had ordered her from New York."

"Naylor? What is he like?"

"He is real nice, I should say, by his looks, and very rich. He has some nieces with him, well dressed and real aristocratic. Belong to the first families, I guess, and quite thick with all the first people at the Beach. No culture to speak of, but high-strung--very!"

"How old is this Mr Naylor, should you suppose? and what is he like? Is he a tall man, now, for instance?"

"He is not tall--no. Thick-set, almost stout; a heap shorter than Gil----Mr Roe. Middle-aged. His hair is beginning to turn. Not old, though certainly not young, but with a nice kindly face, and real cheerful. I hope she will stick to him. It would be real distressing if she were to jilt him, and I don't see what call a divorced husband can have to interfere. What were divorces made for, if not to keep bad husbands from bothering?"

Miss Rolph had been moving uneasily in her chair. She stood up now, looking agitated but very firm.

"I believe I know this Mr Naylor. The engagement must be broken off without an hour's delay. The idea is horrible!... I thought I had done with this awful girl. When she left her husband, and refused to listen to right principle and common decency, I washed my hands of her. But this---- It is an unimaginable horror! When does the next train leave for Clam Beach, I wonder? How do you go?"

"You cannot go to-night You will not be able to connect," Maida answered in some disgust. The idea of Naylor's coming in and securing the lady, and leaving Roe forlorn, which she had begun to conjure up, was distinctly consoling. She did not like to think of the energetic Miss Rolph intervening to upset the pleasing possibility.

Miss Rolph spread out a map. "There is Lippenstock, a station where all trains stop, close by. I can book for there, and drive over in the evening."

Maida sighed. "If you go, Miss Rolph, would you kindly mention to Mrs Denwiddie that I am here? You know her, I daresay; you seem to know every one at the Beach. Say I got a telegram--say anything. She is sure to be thinking something dreadful about my going away so sudden-like--without a word, or taking away my things."

Miss Rolph, in her agitation, looked round on Maida. She could not help smiling, notwithstanding her anxiety. The world is filled with such a tangle of conflicting interests, and each of us has room in his little brain only for the few which connect with himself.

"I do not know the lady, my dear; but I shall mention at the office that you were suddenly called home. I will settle your bill, and bid them pack up and forward your things."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"YOU MAY TRUST ME TO HOLD MY TONGUE!"

The dance at Blue Fish Creek was a success of its kind--the kind which might be expected. It was held in the "town hall," a sort of loft above the station of the village fire-engine, the one large room of the place; used on Sundays as a church by some sect which had not attained to a meeting-house of its own, as a singing-school on winter nights when the younger villagers grew tired of remaining at home, and as general place of gathering where the people met to discuss politics or to be entertained by itinerant players.

The hall was crowded and very hot. Three fiddles supplied the squeaking music of catgut in agony, while the young and active disported themselves amid clouds of dust of their own raising. The dances were complicated and strange, being of the kind in which an earlier generation loved to take exercise; but the motley crowd was happy--poussetted, chassied, and performed feats which I can neither name nor spell, with a will.

Margaret Naylor had had a great deal of young Petty's company, and was rather weary of him. From the moment when her uncle had bidden her farewell, her attention to the young man's conversation had begun to wander. Exert himself as he might, he failed to interest her, and he grew depressed himself in consequence. In the hall he persuaded her to dance once, but she refused point-blank when he ventured to ask her again. He felt dispirited, and soon withdrew from the festive throng, going out into the night, which had fallen dark and starless, and wandering round within hearing of the fiddles and the stamping feet, like a Peri shut out of

Paradise--detesting the sounds of mirth in which he had no share, but unable to drag himself away. Even tobacco, that silent comforter of the miserable, failed to soothe him, and he hung around the entrance of the hall, to which he had no desire to return.

It was growing late. The stablemen had put the horses to the vehicles for the home-going, and ranged them in double row to await the breaking up of the gathering; but still the fiddlers plied the cruel bow upon the screeching catgut, and still the steady tramp of the dancers went on as briskly as ever. Petty lighted a fresh cigar, and told himself that his time of waiting had nearly expired. As the thought formed itself, a figure passed him coming down from the hall. It was muffled, so far as the lightness of summer attire would admit. Something was drawn over the head which made it unrecognisable as it passed quickly from under the dim lamp on the stairs into the darkness without. It stood for an instant accustoming itself to the gloom. He could see it turn about as if looking for an expected object. There was an omnibus provided with a lantern in the line of vehicles, which weakly illumined a little circle around it, and lent a few feeble indications as to more distant objects. The figure looked around again, and then, in a tremulous voice raised little above a whisper, it uttered the one word "Walter!"

Walter Petty's heart bounded into his throat, and beat tumultuously, like a startled bird, against his ribs. This was an altogether unexpected turn. She--there was no question as to who she was, when once that dear voice sounded--she called him by his name! It was her first time to do it, and he had not dared to hope she ever would. The cigar was tossed into the gutter in a twinkling, and he was at her side, too deeply moved to trust himself to speak.

That was unnecessary. Her own excitement compelled her to take the word.

"Oh quick, Walter! If mamma should miss me, and come out in search! What a commotion! Hurry! quick!... The buggy in front?--is it not?... You have everything ready of course? Oh hurry!"

Petty was puzzled What was she up to? Yet it did not matter what. It was right, or she would not do it. And if there was danger, he would be at her side. She flew to the front of the line, he striding, almost running, beside her. She was in the buggy in an instant. He followed. The reins were in his hands. The stable-boy let go the horse's head. They were away.

Away, but whither? Home, of course. Where else could she desire to go? Yet why so much mystery? such anxiety to escape, and steal away? It must be that detestable Wilkie, who had been so intrusive at Fessenden's Island. She had been staving him off for a week back, he thought he had observed. Now her mother was forcing him on her, and she had run away. What a fine spirited girl! Yet why did all the mothers run after that cad Wilkie? He was not a gentleman even, and yet Walter's own mother had been encouraging his attentions to his sister Ann. A pretty brother-in-law to bring into a family! And to think the fellow should presume to have two strings to his bow! And such strings! It made this jolly clatter of hoofs and wheels, this careering headlong through the night, even more delightful, if that were possible, to think of the other man left behind and biting his nails in disappointment.

"Quicker, Walter! quicker! Are we safely away, do you think? Can they overtake us?" How close she nestled to his side! How strong and protecting he felt! How heroic, as he peered out in the darkness, between the ears of his horse, to see if all were clear! The horse could see the way and take the turns, Walter could not. His driving was an act of faith; he could but sit and peer, and feel the horse's mouth, and be alert against a stumble or anything which might befall. Not seeing, he could not guide. It was late, fortunately, and there were no other travellers on the road. The night air blew past them fresh and exhilarating, and the soft pressure of his companion nestling to his side was an unspeakable delight. She seemed agitated--unduly, as it appeared to him; but then a woman is a tender thing, he thought, and how tender and solicitous he would be of this one, if she gave him the right! He could feel her tremble, and she spoke short ejaculatory sentences from time to time; not as if she wanted him to answer--and what was there he could say?--but merely to relieve her high-wrought feelings.

"I did not think I could have done it, Walter. Only for you I could have broke away. I feel quite wicked. But surely even mamma has no right to come in between you and me; and now she certainly must not."

Walter Petty agreed with the conclusion, but was at a loss to divine the premisses through which it was arrived at. However, they were going down a steep hill, his faculties were on the stretch as they jolted down in the darkness, and he had to support the horse, momentarily in danger of a stumble or upset upon the loose stones which encumbered the way. He did not answer, and Margaret was growing accustomed to the situation and recovering her composure.

They passed a wayside tavern whose windows still showed light, standing at a crossing where four ways met. Margaret recognised it, and the next moment observing that they turned to the right, she exclaimed--

"Walter! That is Mollekin's; you should have turned to the left for Narwhal Junction. If you keep on as we are going, we shall be at Clam Beach in fifteen minutes."

"Or ten, dear Margaret," Walter answered.

Margaret bounded up in her seat and drew away. Had Walter not clutched at her gown in

time, she must have fallen out.

"Mr Petty! How come *you* to be here? What trap--what trick is this?"

"You brought me yourself, Miss Naylor. I have complied with your wishes as far as I have known how. You called me. You seemed to want my service. I was proud to be of use."

"You? I was to have met---- I did not call you, Mr Petty. How could you suppose it? I am not intimate with you. We are common acquaintances. That is all. What right had you to intrude? You have done me an irreparable injury. I should not have expected this of you."

"You came out of the hall in haste, Miss Naylor. You spoke to me. You said 'Walter.' I obeyed. I supposed you wanted to get home."

"You----" Margaret did not finish the sentence. Why should she betray herself? she thought. He seemed to have no suspicion as to her intentions. Why should she enlighten him? As he had frustrated her design, her best course was to leave him in his delusion. It would prevent gossip in the hotel. She would acquiesce in his supposition, seeing that her scheme to get away was balked for the present. "I did not know you in the dark, Mr Petty; I thought you were some one else. But it is all right. I have been driven nearly crazy by those jarring fiddles, and the dust and heat. Thanks for your kind readiness to oblige. I am dizzy with headache. I shall go to my room at once, and be asleep before the rest get home."

There was a clatter of hoofs behind them. Margaret drew her wraps over her head, and cowered low in her seat. Was she pursued? Was she overtaken? A little in front shone the lights of the hotel. How welcome they were now! A horseman dashed past at full gallop. He leapt down at the hotel door, and when the buggy drew up, Walter Blount was there to receive Margaret on alighting.

"You took away my buggy, Mr Petty," he observed, when that gentleman's countenance came within the circle of light streaming from the hotel door. "However, you have brought it safely here. Accept my thanks. I will relieve you now." Then turning to Margaret, "Now, dearest! in again!" He followed her, and to Petty's astonishment, the pair were gone.

Joseph Naylor, lounging on the gallery hard by, had seen the passage. He came forward and laid his hand on Petty's arm, as, standing stock-still in his bewilderment, he peered into the darkness after the vanished buggy.

"A strange part you seem to have played in those young folk's comedy--a tantalising part, and laughable, if people knew about it. But we will not tell them, will we? They have been long engaged. Mamma was adverse, perhaps unreasonable. But she will come round. We won't interfere, to spoil sport. Will we, Petty?"

Walter looked round rather ruefully. "You may trust to my holding my tongue, Mr Naylor. My own part in it has not been so distinguished that I need wish it known."

The runaways were on the road to Lippenstock. Walter Blount had spent the evening in the hall ready to follow Margaret as she went out. He had missed her, and waited on, till the party broke up not long after. Then he had found that his buggy was gone, and not seeing the lady, surmised she might be in it--might have got in to await him, and allowed the horse to bolt. He had difficulty in procuring a horse to follow, but in the end succeeded in bribing the man to take a leader out of one of the omnibuses, under a storm of reproaches from the outraged passengers, and had galloped to the Beach in hopes of overtaking and reclaiming his missing "rig"; and he had succeeded, recovering both outfit and passenger.

"Oh, Walter! what luck!" cried Margaret. "I thought that ridiculous Mr Petty had spoiled everything. His name is Walter, it seems; and when I called you, he answered. He should have known I would not call him by his name. We must hurry, though. Everybody will know, now, as soon as they get home. I see we are on the road to Lippenstock."

"Yes. Why should we risk meeting them, even in the dark? But I do not think young Petty will say anything. He seems a decent fellow who would not do a shabby thing; and he is not likely to tell an adventure in which he plays so ridiculous a part. To carry away a lady for another man!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SUSAN IS EQUAL TO THE EMERGENCY.

Mrs Naylor was late of coming down-stairs next morning, but she took no special notice of Margaret's not having come to inquire for her, further than to prepare herself with a taunt at undutiful children against the moment when they should meet. Her empty chair at dinner, however, told that something was amiss; and Lucy could give no information, further than that Margaret had not slept at Clam Beach the previous night.

"Not slept? What do you mean? Have you been keeping this from me all these hours? Why did you not tell me at once?"

"Because you make such a fuss, mamma. It was as much as my peace for all day was worth to disturb you."

"You take it coolly. You must know where she is?"

"No indeed, mamma. She was under your own wing when I saw her last. You sat on one side of her, and Mr Petty on the other. If she has broken away at last from such close *surveillance*, it is not very surprising."

"Has your sister run away, my dear?" asked Mrs Wilkie across the table of Lucy. Then, turning her eyes defiantly on the mother, with whom, since their last set-to, she could scarcely be said to be on speaking terms, she added, "I gave you warning, ma'am, about certain on-goings; and ye were scarcely ceevil to me on the head of it. Who's right now? I'd like to know."

"Whist, mother!" said her son, pulling at her gown under the table. "Let people settle their own hash."

"They would have mixed my son up in their hash, and done for him, if they could. I'll show them I see through them and their pretensions, now when they're fand out, and know what a little-worth crew they are."

Joseph Naylor overheard, and could not restrain a smile, which excited the indignation of his sister-in-law almost beyond control.

"I remember your polite expressions, ma'am," she said; "but there are distinctions which make a difference. The gentleman you then chose to speak of disrespectfully, coupling his name with Miss Naylor's in a most unwarrantable manner, is fifth son of a deputy-lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum in Memicombshire, England. You have not been used to meet gentlemen of his station, and had better not refer to them. Ignorance becomes ridiculous when it forces itself into notice."

"The fifth son of a tirlie-wirlie, is he, ma'am? I think little of that. I'd have ye know that my son has a tirlie-wirlie of his own, if it's a cairidge ye mean. The fifth son of people with a cairidge isn't much. He'd have to ride outside on the dickie beside the driver, I'm thinking."

Mrs Naylor was dumb. It is useless to retort on people who do not, or who will not, understand.

At that moment a telegram was brought to Joseph. He tore it open, read it, and handed it to his sister-in-law.

"This is from Margaret," he whispered. "Control yourself, and do not give the people room to snigger at your expense."

The telegram was dated Gorham, New Hampshire. It ran: "Married at eleven this morning. Margaret Blount."

Mrs Naylor read, and but for the sudden flushing of her features, controlled herself from any outward betrayal of displeasure. It is the one unmixed good which comes of living in public, that people are compelled to suppress their manifestations of feeling; and, driven by stress of circumstances to seem calm, the more speedily become so really. Reason, unimpeded by emotion, which is nourished on its own manifestations, comes sooner to the rescue, and shows how few miscarriages are worth the distress we are apt to give ourselves over them. In pretending before observers to make light of a disappointment, we involuntarily give heed to our own words, and come to think less of it than otherwise we should have done. Mrs Naylor's mind, instead of dwelling on her provocation, was forced to conceal the wound from the impertinently curious, and thereby dividing itself upon two views of the subject--the grievance and its concealment--was less disturbed by either.

The first idea which came distinct to the surface, through her mental perturbation, was an appreciation of her own good sense; and her good fortune, in having boasted, immediately before having received this news, of her son-in-law's high connections. Now that the young man was indissolubly knotted to her family, and she must make the most of him, the Custos Rotulorum, with his ancestral hall in Memicombshire, was the sheet-anchor of his claim to consequence. If it was an ideal claim, instead of the grossly real one she had desired for her daughter's husband, it was infinitely finer in kind; and she prepared to take it up, and brandish it vigorously, to cow and overpower impressible minds, and suppress colonial pretension.

She began to feel quite imperial, after a little trying, and when dinner was over, had come to feel that a Custos Rotulorum made an infinitely finer father-in-law for her girl than all the judges in the Dominion rolled into one could have done. When the ladies gathered up-stairs, therefore, she played her best card, under the circumstances, with quite a good heart; she showed them her telegram, and claimed their congratulations. She talked effusively of "an old attachment"--"two romantic children, who could not bring themselves to profane the interchange of their holy vows, with the garish vulgarities of orange-blossoms and Brussels lace, bride's-maids, breakfast, and speechifying, but had resolved to go away by themselves and be married in peace." "She had been persuaded to keep their secret and say nothing." "They were away on their wedding tour, now; but she was still under promise to reveal no more." "They might have gone to California or to visit the Custos Rotulorum," she would not say which, but she let it be inferred that it was England and the ancestral hall, to which their happy steps were bent.

The ladies thus unexpectedly called on for congratulations paid them at once--they could not help themselves; but they paid them perhaps a little grudgingly, feeling injured at having been balked of the preliminary tattle. Had it been sympathy and condolence which Mrs Naylor claimed, they could have opened their hearts much more freely. They could have mingled a tear or two quite comfortably with hers, and felt deeply interested in the new sensation; but that two young people should go away and get married, without telling anybody, and then that it should turn out a right, proper, and desirable union, was treating them very badly, in the dearth just then of pleasurable excitement.

Joseph Naylor was the only person who fully enjoyed the scene, as he walked upon the gallery with Rose, and looked in through the open windows. What a remarkable woman was this sister-in-law of his, to be sure! and how little he had been aware of those reserves of strength and quickness which she was now displaying to such good purpose! Accustomed in the family circle to have her way, and to overbear opposition with petulance, peevishness, indignation, or convenient ill health, as best suited, it had not occurred to him that for once she could act like a sensible woman and bravely accept the inevitable. He had dreaded an explosion, a scene, perhaps a fainting-fit and general commotion, when in helpless trepidation he had handed her that telegram; and here she was, with a smiling face, claiming felicitation on the overthrow of her plans and wishes, and actually taking credit for a result which had worked itself out in defiance of her opposition.

"There is not an acrobat in Barnum's circus," he said, "who could have turned a somersault as neatly. I could not have believed our Susan capable of so sudden a change of front. A woman of her talent and resource is hid away and completely lost in a small place like Jones's Landing."

Rose agreed with him, and was vastly interested in the whole affair. She dwelt on it, recurred to the different points and stages, discussed, analysed, and combed out every detail separately to its greatest length. It gratified Joseph that she should concern herself so warmly in his family affairs, but he would have been glad if her interest had been sooner satisfied. She contrived that the conversation should not progress, as it naturally would have done, from Margaret's love-passages to their own. Even the night on Fessenden's Island was not able, as Joseph had felt confident that it would be, to withdraw her thoughts from the runaways to their own tender affairs. When he endeavoured to transfer the interest, she returned with renewed curiosity to ask where Margaret and Blount first met, and from that digressed still further, to demand full particulars of his circumstances, birth, and parentage. She was as charmingly companionable as she always had been; Joseph loved and adored as he always did; but he could not draw her on to the closer and more personal topic on which he yearned to hold converse.

That topic--their engagement--was one to which this afternoon she had an insuperable, and, as she told herself, an unreasonable repugnance to reopen at the present moment. Come it must, eventually, and she would welcome it; but not to-day. A shadow was upon her, the shadow of Bertie Roe, an influence to which she was resolved that she would not yield, but which yet had power to cast an unattractiveness and dimness over all beside. She had broken with that man for ever, had she not? but she had spoken with him, in dismissing him, and the converse of all the world beside had lost its relish. She felt, but would not own it. Had she not announced openly her new engagement? and was she, like some poor-spirited slave, to break it off and go back, because her old tyrant had chosen to lift his finger? What would her friends, the world, the free-thinking and strong-minded who had applauded her spirit, say to see her go back to bondage and resume her chains? She chafed to think of it, and tried to lash herself into new anger against her husband. And she had felt so strong in her resolve, all through the bygone week! To think that a few words, and a little pleading, should have weakened her like this! She was growing unworthy of her former self. How dim and indistinct her wrongs had grown since yesterday, when that sweet insidious voice had taken on itself to explain them away! Why had she listened?... And until yesterday, the sight of the woman he was always walking with had made her strong; but that crouching figure under the tree, seen yesterday, who could fear that? How feel jealous of aught so forlorn? There was a little triumph in it, that Bertie should have been brought so low; but she missed the tonic and strengthening influence which had been thus dispelled. She was resolved to resist, to have done with Bertie Roe; but there was a strange diffidence of the strength within her, which she would not acknowledge to herself, but still was aware of, foreboding general collapse.

Trying to keep up this waning strength, she worked hard at being interested in Joseph and his family, especially in the family; that was the easier subject of the two, and it avoided

comparisons, dangerous at this moment--comparison of years, of stature and physical endowment, which told against him.

And so Joseph and Rose worked out this day in ostensible amity and intimacy, but with an inward doubt burrowing and working like hidden currents in spring beneath the ice, eating it away, and honeycombing the solid mass, which still looks huge and immovable as ever; and will continue so to seem, till comes the end, and with a crash the massive structure crumbles and melts and disappears.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MISS ROLPH IS SEVERE.

It was growing late at night. The proprietor and his clerk had concluded the labours of the day, and were arranging with the house-steward the bill of fare for the morrow. The male guests were up-stairs in the parlours with the ladies, or else had secluded themselves to play poker in private rooms, in accordance with the rigorous house-rule against gambling. Gilbert Roe alone paced the lower corridor, smoking cigar after cigar, which failed to soothe him--restless and woebegone, waiting on for he knew not what, unable to tear himself from the dreariest quarters in which he had ever sojourned.

He was not popular with the men. He took no interest in their amusements, having other cares at this time, and they voted him unsociable and of no account. Since Maida's disappearance, the few lady guests with whom he was acquainted had asked him where she was; and on his declaring that he did not know, they had turned away with a frightened and suspicious glance, as though they suspected him of having made away with her. He wandered about the house like another Cain, suspected, dreaded, and shunned, as though there were a mark of warning and of evil on his brow; but he would not go away while Rose remained an inmate of the house. He had an impression that there was an influence within her doing battle on his behalf--he had detected her furtive glances more than once wandering towards him, and averted again ere he could meet them, and he would not go away; but the waiting was inexpressibly dreary in the meantime.

The rumble of wheels was heard outside; a vehicle stopped before the door. The porter, drowsing in his corner, started to his feet and ran down to carry in baggage, and the landlord followed to inspect the untimely arrival. It was a tall spare lady, dressed in black, who walked straight to the desk and registered herself, "Principal Rolph, Female College, Montpelier;" then asked to have Miss Springer's bill made out, that she might settle it, and desired that lady's effects to be packed up and forwarded.

Having finished her business with the clerk, she turned to follow the bell-boy to her appointed chamber, and met Roe straight in the eye, as he wearily paced the tiles, counting the minutes in their lagging flight, till his hour should arrive for turning in.

"Bertie Roe! Ha! you may well look guilty and ashamed to face me. You did not expect to see me here, I reckon."

He held out his hand to her, though his look on meeting was scarcely one of welcome.

"We will dispense with hand-shaking, all things considered. We can neither of us be very pleased to see the other; but you need not pass on. I mean to speak my mind to you before I let you go."

"Speak on, Miss Rolph. It is natural you should feel strongly against me. I will not even tell you that it was not my fault. That would seem like casting reflections where I promised and still wish to defend."

"That sounds proper enough; but I have more against you than you think--another instance of your misconduct. What possesses you, Bertie Roe, to go prowling and ravening about the world like this?--blighting the lives and devastating the affections of trusting women? Why do you do it? What pleasure can you feel in crushing a girl's self-respect, and making her feel shameless and a fool?"

"She does not feel one bit like a fool, Miss Rolph; and her self-respect is not crushed at all. Far from wishing to crush her, I am ready to humble myself, and take the blame of what I did not bring about, and, heaven knows, had no wish should happen."

"Then you did not wish Maida Springer to run away as she did? If she had stayed, would you have proposed to marry her? You took a curious way to show your intentions."

"Maida Springer! What have I to do with *her?* And what have *you* to do with Maida Springer?"

"She is a particular friend of mine. I have a high opinion of Maida Springer, and I think you have behaved to her like a ruffian."

"We are old friends. I have always wished her well, and she wishes me well, I am sure. An unkind word has never passed between us, and we have been constantly together for--let me see--all the time I have been staying here."

"I know that; and when a single man devotes himself in that open way to an unmarried woman, what does it mean, if not marriage? Was it honourable of you, Bertie Roe, to behave like that?"

"I do not consider myself a single man, Miss Rolph. I never shall--unless--unless--which God forbid!"

"Did you tell her you did not consider yourself single?"

"How could I, Miss Rolph? Do you think a man is made of wood and leather?"

"Then you left her to believe that you were single, Bertie Roe; and you should be ashamed of yourself. You told her--I have it from herself--that you were not married."

"Neither am I, Miss Rolph. The Divorce Court has annulled my marriage."

"You have behaved dishonourably, Bertie; and with callous cruelty besides, from what she told me, in betraying her weakness as you did, to the other. It was not a manly act, let me tell you. I expected better things of you."

"How could I know, or even suspect? Do you take me for so conceited an ass that I must needs suppose every woman I converse with is in love with me?"

"That will not do, Bertie. You are not such a stripling as not to know that girls expect to marry, that society forbids them to make the advance, and that if a man pays them undivided and conspicuous attention, they are entitled to believe that he means something."

"I never thought of that, Miss Rolph. If you will believe me, there is but one woman in the world I can ever feel towards in that way."

"And a pretty way you took to show your love!--deserted her--judgment by default--'cruelty and desertion'!"

"What could I do? She would not listen to reason. I could not let her name be dragged through the law reports in company with those of all the worst people in the State. No; you must acknowledge, Miss Rolph, that I showed forbearance and consideration there, at least. What would the charming little tempers we both remember have looked like, after being carded out and hackled by a pair of foul-mouthed lawyers? They would have made her a laughing-stock to the whole country. I know I was right in letting judgment go by default, though it went sorely against my grain to do it."

"And now you see the consequence. She is engaged to marry another man."

"But you will not let her, Miss Rolph? You will insist on her giving me another chance. I am confident she will never be fond of any one else as she was fond of me, and still is in her heart, if she would listen to its promptings."

"That you may bicker together incessantly, and quarrel anew?--like a pair of spoilt children, to be a scandal to decent people?"

"Ah! that is over, you may rely, Miss Rolph. I venture to assert that we have both suffered too deeply in our separation ever to let the bond, if it should be renewed, fret us again. Such patience as we shall have with one another, will be a sight to see. You will help us to make it up, Miss Rolph? Your advice goes a long way with her."

"I fear not. I have tried ere now, and had my interference declined with thanks. I cannot attempt to make it up between you and her. In fact I had resolved to wash my hands of her altogether; but for other reasons, this new engagement of hers must be broken off, though I shall not approach *her* on the subject--in the first instance, at least. I shall go to the gentleman."

"Only break it off, dear Miss Rolph, and you have my lifelong gratitude--and hers too, though it seems a bold assertion; but I have seen signs of relenting, and I believe it is pride, and the fear of being laughed at, which chiefly keep up the estrangement."

"We shall see, Bertie; but you do not deserve it," said Miss Rolph, attempting to keep up the rigour of her first words, though the friendliness of her nod and smile at parting belied the

pretence.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MILLICENT.

Next morning, Joseph Naylor was disturbed in the act of shaving by the intelligence that a lady desired to see him, and that she was waiting his coming down-stairs in one of the parlours.

"A lady? Who is it? What does she want?" he inquired of the black boy who brought the message.

"Principal of the Female College at Montpelier, sah."

"Never heard of the institution. Some one drumming up for pupils, I suppose. My nieces are rather old to put to school. They would not go if I tried to put them. Why does she not apply to their mother? Susan never did allow me to interfere about the schools--or anything else, for that matter, when she could manage without me."

He finished his dressing quickly, however, and hastened down-stairs.

In the parlour stood a tall, grey woman, clad in black, awaiting him. He advanced with a low bow and a look of inquiry. The lady looked earnestly in his face, coming forward to meet him with extended hand.

"You do not know me, Joseph?"

Joseph stared in surprise at so intimate a form of address; yet there was a tone in the voice which seemed not unfamiliar, though he could not connect it in his memory with any particular time, place, or person.

"I am changed, of course,"--it was still the lady who spoke,--"but so are you. Try if you cannot recall. It is five-and-twenty years since we last met."

"You have the advantage, ma'am."

"My name is Millicent Rolph. You know me now?"

"You? Do you mean that you are Lina's sister?"

"I am, Joseph--your sister-in-law. You cannot have forgotten our last meeting at the old home in New Orleans?"

"I can never forget the last time I met Millicent Rolph; but I trace no resemblance between you and her. She was a woman of thirty, dark-haired, large, handsome; you--do not resemble her."

"She was thirty twenty-five years ago, and you were twenty-two. The years have left their mark upon us both. I cannot but be changed. I have come through the troubles of a lifetime. There was the war, and mother's death, and the ruin of our affairs in New Orleans; and there have been trials and much hard work since then, to change me into the spare, elderly, white-haired woman you see now. You are changed too, though life has dealt less harshly, I should judge. Yet I recognised you at once, though I had prayed that I might not--that you might prove to be another man, bearing by accident the name of my brother-in-law.... We were such friends once, Joseph, in the long ago. Sitting under the shade of the magnolias in the dear old garden, with Lina between us----"

"Have done, Millicent! I confess now that it is you. I recognise your voice. But do not stir up old memories. They haunted me like ghosts for more than twenty years. It is only recently that I have been able to lay them.... Let them lie. You weighed me down with misery enough when last we met. Do not refer to it. I had rather we had not met now. It is like reopening a grave, even to hear you speak. It brings back all I would forget--all I have been cheating myself into believing that I had buried and got rid of at last."

"I can understand the feeling."

"What can I do to serve you? Tell me; but let us part at once. I will do anything, but I cannot

stand here listening. Your voice is heavy with memories like forebodings; my heart sinks at the very sound. Speak, and let me leave you. What do you want?"

"I want nothing, Joseph--nothing for myself. It is for your own sake I am come, and it tears my heart to say the things I have to tell you."

"You said something like that when you acted so cruelly before, you and your mother; but you did not spare me."

"I am come to warn you, Joseph, against this marriage you propose to make."

"You are? Have you not injured me enough in my affections already? Are five-and-twenty years of widowhood not enough to have inflicted on one who never knowingly offended you? What wrong have I done you, that you should persecute me like this?"

"Joseph, I always loved you like a sister. It crushes me to be made the herald of your disappointments; but I have no choice."

"I will not listen to you. You shall not put me from Rose as you did from Lina. Let me pass."

"You cannot marry Rose. You must stop and hear me;" and she planted herself between him and the door.

"Then I must escape by the window; and there she is, standing at the farther end of the gallery. How spirited and sweet she looks--how like our Lina!... Millicent, you will pity, and not come in between? Look, she sees us! She starts. She is coming to us with that pretty shyness which seems half defiance. One would think she knew you well, Millicent?"

"She does, Joseph. Listen to her when we meet; it will save a world of painful explanation."

Rose came forward, not very quickly, though pride forbade her faltering. She held her head erect, and her colour was heightened; but her eyes were far from steady, and for all her endeavours to outface the situation, betrayed an inclination to seek the ground.

"You here, Aunt Millicent? I did not know that you and Mr Naylor were acquainted."

"*Aunt* Millicent? Are you two related, then?" gasped Joseph, his nether jaw falling.

"She is your own daughter, Joseph Naylor! It was to tell you so that I sought you out--to preserve you from the hideous mistake you were about to make. But oh! it breaks my heart that I should be your messenger of evil tidings again."

Joseph leant against the window-jamb, looking very pale, and uttering a sigh so deep that it sounded like a moan.

"Do you mean that she is Lina's child?" he said, after a pause.

"Yes; and yours."

"I never was told that I had a child. You might have told me that, when you told the rest."

"Would it have been easier, think you, to bear the loss of Lina, if you had been told that we were keeping you from your child? If we had told you of her birth, perhaps you might have claimed her. Lina must have learnt everything. She would have died of shame and remorse."

"When was the child born?"

"The day the news reached us of her father's loss at sea; her birth was hastened by the news. The mother nearly died. She fell out of one fainting-fit into another, till exhausted nature could endure no more. For days her life hung trembling in the balance, and then the sight of the baby turned the scale. There was something to live for--something that seemed part of you. We took them North. The baby throve, and for her sake poor Lina took heart and tried to live."

"And you deprived the child even of its father's name?"

"Hillyard adopted her. Lina had no other family. She lived five years only after that marriage."

"Why did you not restore her to me when her mother died?"

"We could not, Joseph: the world is so big. Where were we to look for you? You came no more to New Orleans. By-and-by the war drove us North, and reduced us to poverty. Mother died. I went to live with Hillyard and bring up the child. He was devoted to her. They were everything to one another. It would have been cruelty to interfere."

"You seem to have had pity for every one but me, Millicent. Could this Hillyard's rights in the child compare with mine?"

"You had gone out of our lives, Joseph. We knew--that is, I knew--little about your family, except that they lived somewhere up in Canada. That was too far away for us, living in New

Orleans, to take much interest in. Afterwards, when I lived with Hillyard in Canada, near Sarnia, I did not remember, or know how to set about inquiring."

"You might have been more considerate, Millicent. You have had a care for every one but me. I do not deny that you do your duty in interfering to prevent me from marrying my own daughter; but you should have begun sooner. To find an intended wife changed into a daughter is--is--is a shock!"

"You will bear it, Joseph, like the man you are. In any case, you could not have married this headstrong girl: she is another man's wife."

Rose flushed, but said nothing. She and her Aunt Millicent had been accustomed to each other's contradictious speeches all through life. It was Joseph who came to the rescue of his new-found daughter.

"You should not speak so, Millicent, of your sister's child. You may not hold with divorces in general, but you should keep quiet in this case. If the law of her country declares her single, there is no gainsaying it."

"That is just where the impediment stands, Joseph; for I have taken a lawyer's advice. She is a single woman in the United States, and a married one in British territory. She was married at Sarnia in Canada. She is Bertie Roe's wife wherever British law prevails, seeing that she was granted her divorce on grounds which a British court will not allow. See the scrape your daughter is in! and use a father's authority to send her back to her husband."

Rose tried to grow angry. She turned upon her aunt with a frown, to repudiate the proposal and declare she would never go back. But the words failed her; a strange, sweet weakness stole through every limb. She felt conquered without knowing how, or desiring to know why. She covered her face and burst into tears.

Millicent saw her opportunity. While father and daughter were still struggling with themselves to regain composure, she sent for Roe, presented him to his father-in-law, and explained the legal position of his relation to his wife.

The wife kept her face concealed in her handkerchief, but she relented so far as to let Bertie take her hand. To all expostulation she declared that she could not do more. "Was she to make herself the laughing-stock of the house? She was on American ground, where Millicent herself acknowledged she was free; and she would remain so, or go right away from everybody, if they teased her any more."

It was concluded at length that they should return to Canada that very day. Roe, Mrs Naylor, Lucy, and Millicent, accompanied Rose and her father; and Blount and Margaret were telegraphed to meet them at Jones's Landing. There, away from the curious eyes of fellow-guests who had been witnesses, if unconscious ones, of their little comedy, the party at once fell into their readjusted relations with one another. Joseph, with a grown-up and married daughter, naturally took the position of benevolent patriarch and head of the family. He associated Blount in his business, thereby securing that his niece should not be carried away into the wilds, and contenting his sister-in-law Susan, who thereafter maintained in private to Lucy that she had carried her point after all, notwithstanding the seeming defeat; as, but for the stand which she had made against Margaret's living in the woods, it never would have occurred to Joseph to provide for Blount, and settle the pair beside her at Jones's Landing.

From the moment Rose got into the railway at Narwhal Junction, she slid contentedly back into Mrs Roe. No one ever again alluded to an estrangement between the married pair, and Jones's Landing was left in total ignorance that their married life had ever been other than the even, trustful, and happy existence which it had now become. The two seemed never apart, never weary of each other's society, yet never in each other's way in fulfilling the duties of social life. The only separation which took place between them was when Gilbert returned to Chicago to wind up his affairs there, preparatory to settling in Canada beside his father-in-law. Rose shrank from meeting again the aiders and abettors who had encouraged her matrimonial escapades, of which she was now thoroughly ashamed, as well as the friends who had disapproved of her conduct. Having sealed a peace with her husband, she was fain to forget that they had ever been divided. Scenes and persons associated with the estrangement had become alike detestable to her; she wished never to see or hear of them again. The only occasion on which she has ever recurred to that miserable year of her life was when, about twelve months after their establishment at Jones's Landing, she came unexpectedly upon Bertie writing a letter, with a case containing jewellery lying open on the desk beside him.

"What a lovely bracelet, Bertie!"

He looked up, colouring and confused, and drew the blotting-paper across his letter.

"And you are writing! To whom, pray? Sending valuable presents to ladies, and not a word to your wife. There was a time--when,--but never mind. Who is it you are writing to?"

"It is--but you never heard the name--Mrs Langenwoert."

"No. Where did you know her?"

"Do you remember the little schoolma'am at Clam Beach?--the last lady you did me the honour to be jealous of? She is to be married to-morrow."

THE END.

PRINTED BY WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK TRUE TO A TYPE, VOL. 2 (OF 2) ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project

Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

> This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing

Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”

- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.