

always drawing ships on his slate or making boats in his copy-book, or reading stories of adventure when he should have been learning the multiplication table or studying his spelling lessons. What wonder that he ran away to sea before he was big enough to remember! They had heard of him now and then, in some far distant city through a hastily scrawled letter to his father, or some strange, foreign gift to his mother. But otherwise he had dropped out of the lives of those to whom he was nearest.

And now he had come back. She supposed he was brown as copper, be-whiskered and long-haired, like the sailors and travellers she had read of; yet, somehow, she was delighted to think of seeing him once more. It would at least be some one from the old home and circle for which her heart ached in every fibre.

And this was Wednesday, the very day he was coming! She arose at once and dressed carefully, her excitement and anticipation giving color to her face and strength to her limbs. She was transformed from the pale, listless woman who, an hour before, had not cared whether she lived or died.

She was agreeably surprised when she entered the parlor and found there a tall, well-formed well-appearing man. Red-haired he still was, to be sure; freckled and bronzed as to skin, with great hands and feet. Yet he was neatly dressed and carried himself well, and one forgot freckles and auburn locks in the kindly look of the strong, manly face.

He took both of her toil-worn hands in his, and looked earnestly into her eyes.

"It's the same old Martha," he said, "that was always making doll-clothes for the other girls, instead of herself, and tying up the boys' cut fingers. Why you look just like you used to."

They sat and talked of old days, of the boys and girls they used to know,

of events that happened many, many, years ago; laughing one moment, ready to weep the next, forgetful of the time that had passed since they were children, forgetful of the moments of the long summer afternoon as they sped by. Only the ringing of the supper-bell brought them back to the present.

"Is it possible!" said Peter, as he looked at his watch. "You are a witch to make me forget the flight of time. You are happy and contented here, Martha?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, "and well taken care of. But it seems so good to see you, Peter,—to see some one from home, I mean. One can't forget, you know. Last night—" She stopped. She would not confess, even to him, the paroxysm of homesickness from which she had suffered. But he seemed to guess, and the face, which a moment before had been full of laughter, grew grave.

"Yes, I can guess. You will let me come again? Good-bye!"

And he was gone before she had a chance to answer.

He did come again, until Martha, full of old-fashioned notions of propriety and old-maidish fears of being teased by her associates, half dreaded to see him come, half feared he would not. She must have intimated as much to him, for one day he suggested that they should walk in a little park close by, and afterward that was their meeting place in the bright, summer afternoons. When it rained, or she did not come, there was sure to be a letter from him, or a book or some trifle to show that he thought of her.

In spite of her shyness and old-maidishness, Martha thoroughly enjoyed these meetings, the half clandestine nature which they had assumed only adding to their charm; for Martha had the unconscious love of the romantic which is a part of every feminine nature.