

matters." These reasons and his dislike—good easy man! of feeling at variance with Mabel, induced Mr. Alterton to send a more cordial letter than his daughter had expected.

There was, however, a difficulty in the case that Mabel was not aware of, though it slightly disturbed Miss Germaine. Mrs. Burnish would have preferred a clergyman's daughter, and might object to that very thing which evidently distressed Mabel—her father's business. However, Miss Germaine felt that she was armed against that objection, by the fact that Mabel had only spent six days in her father's house in her life.

It happened just as she had anticipated. Mabel's twelve years of regular instruction on one system and by good masters, added to the personal qualities of temper and manners that Miss Germaine guaranteed, was a recommendation that outweighed the misfortune of her father not being able to boast a clerical or professional status, or Mabel's not being able to write *herself gentleman's daughter*. A personal interview was all now that was required; but as it happened that Lady Burnish, the widow of Sir Hopwood Burnish, and the grandamma of the two little girls whom Mabel was to instruct, was expected in Bath, her ladyship was to see Miss Alterton and settle all preliminaries.

The fortnight that intervened before the interview was not without incident to Mabel. She received the following characteristic letter from Frank Horncastle:—

DEAR MABEL,

"I flatter myself that the purport of these few lines will be neither uninteresting to you, nor quite unexpected,—for young ladies are sharp sighted to see when they are admired; and, if it had not been for Tom's surly temper, there would have been no quarrel at home last week, and I should have had the opportunity of telling you, as I meant, after we'd seen the last of poor mother, and as my manner must, of the great affection I have always had for you. I might boast of the encouragement that many young ladies have given me, but the thought of you always kept me from noticing them; and I beg to say, my hand and heart are at your service. An early reply will oblige,

"DEAR MABEL,

"Yours till death,

"FRANK HORNCASTLE."

Mabel could not forbear a smile as she read this effusion; and though a girl's first offer is always an interesting event, she felt sure her refusal would, at most, only wound Frank's vanity. His heart was impervious. Ah, foolish Mabel! wounded vanity heals slower than most wounds. She replied:—

"DEAR FRANK,

"Whenever I have thought of you, it has been as a brother. I am unable and unwilling to think of you otherwise. I have just obtained my father's consent to my entering on a situation as governess; and I hope, for some years, to devote myself, heart and hand, to my new pursuits, and must at once, and *decidedly*, decline, with thanks, the offer you have made. With every friendly wish for your future welfare, believe me,

"Yours truly,

"MABEL ALBERTON."

Miss Germaine, with a true womanly instinct in such matters, was aware of this little incident; and she jumped to the conclusion that Mabel had been persecuted with attentions that displeased her, and that the dread of encountering a disagreeable suitor at home had added to her wish to enter the position she had chosen.

It was not without considerable trepidation that Mabel prepared for her interview with Lady Burnish. She knew how celebrated the family were in general, and her ladyship in particular, for intelligence and philanthropy,—how their immense wealth and influence were constantly lauded,—and she had caught something of the enthusiasm of Miss Germaine with regard to them, and felt a proportionate anxiety as to the result of the interview.

Certainly, if a fine person and elegant manners and valuable credentials, Mabel had little to dread, as she entered the spacious drawing-room that over-looked the gardens and valley, and was bounded in the distance by the Beechen cliff. The bright sky, the breezy freshness of an April morning had given color to the cheeks and firmness to the nerves of the young girl. She waited so long alone that she began to think she was forgotten, when a tall footman ushered her into the presence of an old lady, who was very quietly seated in her boudoir, arranging a great multitude of tracts. Lady Burnish was not alone: a young clergyman sat at the same table assisting the work of selection.

Lady Burnish was small in person, and cold in manners, with a shrewd, penetrating glance, lighting up a thin, pale face, and giving an expression of rigid resolve to the countenance, which the thin compressed lips confirmed. She was dressed with studied plainness, in a grey silk dress, plain muslin collar, and a little nicely quilled cap neatly covering her grey hair. Nothing could be more appropriate to her age than her dress—nothing more calmly rational than her whole appearance. What was it that Mabel missed as she approached this lady, and took a chair sufficiently near for the scrutinizing glance peering through the spectacles to read her thoroughly? It was love that was wanting. Not a trace of feeling blended with that searching look, or curved those firm lips that parted with so mechanical a smile.

"You are very young, Miss Alterton," was the first remark, after the usual civilities. Mabel "hoped that would not be an objection;" and really, in her deep mourning, she looked so grave, that Lady Burnish said, slowly,—

"Why, no—perhaps not; and yet, my son and daughter had thought of thirty as a suitable age; I believe I am right, Mr. Veering, in saying thirty?"

"Quite right, my lady," replied the gentleman appealed to, in a voice so bland that it seemed to say, "You never can be wrong."

"But they may forego that in favor of a pupil of Miss Germaine's."

Mabel bowed, and her ladyship continued, again addressing the clergyman,—

"You'll, sometimes, Mr. Veering, attain a great rectitude of principle—anticipates, I may say, the wisdom of maturity."

"I should hope so, my lady," again responded the clergyman, with a gentle sigh, and a slight upward glance, as if half appropriating the remark to himself. He added, however, after a short pause, and with a grateful fervor, "It depends upon the privileges the young have been favored with."

"Ah! true, very true," responded the lady, as if gratified by an implied compliment. She then proceeded to inform Mabel that her two expectant pupils were the youngest, and only daughters of the family—that the household was most piously regulated, and that strict conformity of religious sentiment was required—that the governess would live entirely with, and must be completely devoted to her pupils, and, finally, that Mrs. Theophilus Burnish superintended her daughters' education, and that Mr. Theophilus also exercised great supervision, and that Mabel would be required to submit her will and opinions in all things to theirs.

At the end of each enumeration of these particulars, the clergyman was appealed to, and he always uttered an assent, coupled with a compliment, delicately insinuated, partly designed to let Mabel know that she was about entering the wisest, holiest, best families in Britain.

This Mr. Veering, Mabel learned, was the tutor of two sons of the household, who had been recently on a visit to their grandamma, and were now leaving her at Bath, and purposing a speedy return to town. As the conversation passed, Mr. Veering continued sorting the tracts, and now and then, with a contemptuous smile, passed over some to his patroness, who, with a gesture of displeasure, threw them into a basket at her side. As this process rather disturbed her examination of Mabel, she explained it by saying,—

"I distribute great quantities of tracts to my schools, by my district visitors, and Scripture readers, and, I am sorry to say, some of a most obnoxious character have got into circulation, and I resolved to call them all in, and examine them myself; nothing like doing things oneself, Miss Alterton." "There," she said, handing two tracts across the table as she spoke, "what do you think of that?" Mabel read the titles, "Water is Best," and "Who killed the Man?" Not knowing exactly what to say, Mabel replied, "I know nothing of their merits, my lady."

"Their merits, Miss Alterton, would be difficult to discover," interposed Mr. Veering.

"Their demerit is," said her ladyship, "that instead of teaching faith as the only ground of a sinner's hope, they teach a wretched practical morality—a delusion."

"A vulgar fanaticism," chorused Mr. Veering.

Mabel heard in silence, rather wondering how tracts on water-drinking and sobriety could be very dangerous, and much relieved when the interview ended by Lady B. naming an early day for her to go to London, as Mr. Theophilus Burnish and his family were at their town house. Mabel would not have been much gratified if she had seen the letter which Lady Burnish sent to her daughter, which, as far as it referred to Mabel, was to this effect:—

"As to the young person so highly recommended by Miss Germaine, she is no doubt well brought up, and of superior acquirements, having been absurdly educated at a extravagant way above her station, her father being in the wine-trade in some of its retail branches. You know how these people, having large means, often are their betters. She is certainly too young, and would by many people be thought too attractive for the situation she seeks to fill. No one wants the charge of a girl who thinks herself a beauty. Not that I saw any vanity about her—not at all. I fancy she would be more docile than an older person; so I concluded by telling her to be ready to join you next week. I advise you to occupy her time fully. Let her leisure be engaged in investigating your charity cases. It will do her good, and relieve you of a charge your health is unequal to."

(To be Continued.)

"No observing man who has lived in this State [Maine] for twenty years, and has had an opportunity to know the facts, can doubt that the Maine law has produced a hundred times more visible improvement in the character, condition, and prosperity of our people, than any other law that was ever enacted."—Hon. *Wendell Dazis*, of the *Supreme Court of Maine*.