

The Family Circle.

"Home, Sweet Home."

Loaning a Lover.

My sister Patricia was an heiress. Strange enough, for we had always been terribly poor down at Lowbridge, my widowed mother bringing up her four daughters with the greatest difficulty; but when brought up we were worth looking at, I believe. Healthy habits and frugal living are apt to make good conditions, and Bess and Amy and Patricia and I were as bright and handsome girls as are often seen.

Bess and Amy were twins, with eyes as blue as the sea water near which they were born, rosy cheeks, and long, light brown curls; Patricia was a sparkling brunette, while I was as perfect a blonde, with crinkled hair like molten gold.

Great had been our excitement when Aunt Betty wrote from Fairhaven:—

"Dear Sister-in-Law: I am going to do myself the pleasure of visiting you this summer. I hear that brother Abel left four girls, and I want to see them. I am getting on in years, and will make one of them my heiress," etc.

Aunt Betty of Fairhaven was worth a hundred thousand dollars if she was worth a cent.

Well, in due time she came. She put up at the hotel, for our cottage at Lowbridge wasn't big enough to hold her, with her maid, coachman and carriage; but fortunately that was close by, and she spent the larger half of three days with us.

We all thought Bess would be her choice, for father had named her Elizabeth for Aunt Betty, though she had always been "Bess" with us; but it was not either of the twins, and it was not I—it was Patricia.

"Where did that girl get her black hair?" Aunt Betty asked, as soon as she saw her.

"I think she looks like my brother Luke, don't you?" asked her mother, with a wistful look.

"The very image of him," answered Aunt Betty, turning pale.

I divined then, as I learned afterward, that Uncle Luke had been a lover of Aunt Betty's when both were young, before her marriage, and the fact seemed to have a power over her.

She looked at Patricia until the girl blushed rosy red, and would have slipped out of the room, when she called her to her, and drawing her down upon her knees on a footstool before her, she put a withered hand each side of the warm cheek, and said warmly:—

"My dear, you shall be my heiress."

So it was Patricia she chose to leave her money to; but we were not left out in the cold, for she sent the twins, who were only sixteen, to a convent school for two years, and invited me with Patricia to the Hermitage.

It was her home—a stately old mansion of gray stone, gloomy-looking on the outside, but luxuriously comfortable and beautiful within, without being in the least modern. We had each a maid and the free use of the horses and carriage. After making this provision for our comfort, Aunt Betty excused herself from making company of us, and we were free as air to enjoy ourselves as we chose, provided we did not interfere with her naps. We chose to make a great many pleasant acquaintances, guided conscientiously by Aunt Betty's wishes, and the result was that I returned to Lowbridge in the summer engaged to Mr. Clyde Sherrington. He was wealthy, handsome, agreeable, well connected. Everybody said "Gertrude has done well for herself."

That autumn Aunt Betty died. Patricia was to come in possession of her fortune in a year, when she was twenty-one—full and undisputed possession of one hundred thousand dollars.

It was arranged that we were all to come to the Hermitage to live. We did so, and had lived there quietly, as was becoming, for nearly a year, when Patricia made the acquaintance of Mr. Gage Redmond.

She met him first at a funeral—of all places!—the occasion caused by the death of our next neighbor, Gen. De Lacy, Gage Redmond being a neighbor of his. He was well connected, but poor as a church mouse, people said; so of course he was after Patricia's fortune, mamma declared.

"Patricia is rich and beautiful. Pray don't let her marry a fortune-hunter, mamma," said I, looking up from a letter I was writing to Mr. Sherrington.

"I would not, if I could help it; but what authority have I, Gertrude," said my mother. "In a few months Patricia will be in undivided possession of her fortune. We are here only by courtesy. The Hermitage is her home. I have no right to control her whatever."

"But your influence, mamma."

"Will have very little effect if she sets her heart on this Gage Redmond. Pray stop staring vacantly out of the window, Gertrude, and attend to what I say. I want assistance in this matter."

"Please excuse me. I am thinking of my own affairs just now, mamma. They may be of no consequence to you, but my letter is a matter of some importance to me."

I did not mean to be saucy, only pettish; and mamma having had long experience with four headstrong girls, bore it with me quite patiently.

"Well, finish your letter, Gertrude, and then advise with me."

But my train of thought was broken, and after a few moments I put the sheet in my writing-desk.

"What can't be accomplished openly must be done by stratagem, mamma. It is probable this Gage Redmond is after Patricia's money. She is a great prize matrimonially. Well, you say I am prettier than Patty. Suppose I play decoy?"

"What?" cried mamma.

"Mr. Redmond is dark and reserved. I am fair and volatile. Don't you think he would appreciate my style of beauty? I took a little pains to make him do so?"

"But Mr. Sherrington?"

"I will tell him. He will not object."

"I think he will."

"Oh, no! He will be interested in the good of the family. He comes next week. Fortunately, Patty is sick with a cold, and Mr. Redmond can see but little of her until then."

Quite pleased with my scheme, I ran up stairs to give Patricia her cough drops, sitting down at the window of her room, and bowing cordially to Mr. Redmond, whom I could see writing in his uncle's study in the great mansion across the way. The larches hid all the house but that one window. He was there a good deal, and I reflected that Patty's blue silk curtains were more becoming to my style of beauty than hers.

"I'll bring my embroidery up and sit with you Patty," I said.

"Do," she said. "I am tired of watching the evergreens swaying about against that gray spring sky."

So I filled my lap with rose-colored worsted, and framed myself in the blue window drapery for Redmond's benefit.

Just the colors to set off the snow and pink of my complexion. I had the satisfaction of meeting his eyes more than once when I glanced over the way.

"Seems to me you've got wonderfully good spirits, Gert," remarked Patricia, laughingly.

The De Lacy dinner-bell rang, and Mr. Redmond disappeared.

"Well, I must take them in another direction now," I said, rising. "I can't give any more time to you, sis, for I want to finish my blue silk suit before Mr. Sherrington comes. You'd better take a nap."

Patricia settled herself obediently among her cushions. Suddenly she lifted her beautiful head.

"Has Mr. Redmond called to inquire for me to-day, Gertrude?"

"No, I believe not," I replied, indifferently.

She showed a moment's surprise, then settled herself on her couch again, and in five minutes was sleeping sweetly.

The blue silk suit was finished, and, having laid aside my half mourning for Aunt Betty and donned it, the family pronounced it charming.

"Is Mr. Sherrington coming to-day, Gertrude?" asked mamma.

"Yes."

"I want to say to you, my dear, that on Mr. Sherrington's account I don't think you had better—" she whispered, but I interrupted her by my exit from the apartment.

The next train brought Mr. Clyde Sherrington.

"How delightful that the spring is at hand," said he; "the sunshine growing warm and the grass springing. I passed a bit of wood coming up from the station that is full of arbutus. We will have some delightful walks, Gerty. I am very tired of city life."

"Yes, Clyde, dear, but you see I have been obliged to make a little plan which will interfere somewhat with that arrangement," I replied, quickly. "In fact, for the family good, you know, I want to lend you to Patricia."

"Lend me to Patricia?"

"Yes; while I lure away a most ineligible suitor she has. Mamma and I conclude that it is the only way," I added. "Patricia has a fortune of one hundred thousand dollars, you know."

"Yes."

"Well, we think this Mr. Gage Redmond is after her money. He is only a briefless lawyer. We can't afford to let Patty make such a match as that, and so, as I don't think I'm a totally uninterested person—do you Clyde?—I am going to try and flirt a little with Mr. Redmond. Now, you won't be a bear, and say no, will you, dear? And you'll try to help us by devoting yourself a bit to Patricia, won't you?"

At first my companion did not believe that I was in earnest but when convinced of my sincerity, his astonishment was inexpressible. I remember that he stammered out some faint objections, but I would not listen, and, before retiring that night, I whispered to mamma that I had made it all right with Mr. Sherrington, and she had only to observe how nicely I would manage the whole matter.

I sent Patricia off in the morning to find arbutus with Mr. Sherrington, while I waited to receive Mr. Redmond.

When he came I was in the garden, and ordered lunch an hour earlier than usual. My pale blue silk looked beautiful on the lawn grass.

"Pray come and see my tulips, Mr. Redmond," I called as he walked up the avenue.

He came, pleased enough, and as he was especially fond of flowers I had no difficulty in detaining him for more than half an hour.

Then, seeing him looking at his watch, I observed:—

"We won't wait lunch for Patricia, for Mr. Sherrington is with her. They have gone roaming off after spring flowers, and may not be back these three hours. Come in and have a bit of salad with a cup of chocolate, Mr. Redmond. I made the chocolate myself, and can recommend it."

So I kept him for another half hour, and he left, pleased with his visit.

Patricia and Sherrington came back only fifteen minutes after the usual lunch hour, the former so delighted with a profusion of pink arbutus as hardly to heed when a servant informed her that "Mr. Redmond had called to see her, and had staid with Miss Gertrude for lunch."

She had put the rosy clusters in her dark hair and on the bosom of her graceful gray dress, and, flushed with her long ramble, I think I never saw her look so perfectly lovely. "He has been here. Very nice of you to keep out of the way so long," I whispered to Clyde.

He looked at me queerly, but said nothing. I did not want him to expostulate with me as I believed he wished to do, and so kept apart from him during the evening, leaving him to play and sing with Patricia.

He was interesting with his very natural manner of reserved modesty. I was glad when Patricia found him so. He had pale, silken hair, that fell in shadowy curls over a beautiful forehead; soft, dark eyes, softly modulated tones. He contrasted nicely with her dark, spirited beauty.

"Clyde has an elder brother—Raymond—just the one for Patricia," I mused. I wonder if it cannot be brought about."

But I soon had my hands full, for at all hours of the day Mr. Redmond came to the Hermitage. And it was not long before my success as a decoy was patent to the most careless observer. He asked only for "Miss Gertrude." He came solely to see me.

In three weeks the crises burst upon me: He proposed.

"I used to think Mr. Sherrington was your lover," he said, standing before me, the light on his frank, handsome face.

"but late observation has shown me that his visits here are

for your sister. Since you are free, then, will you marry me? I can support you well, Gertrude, or I would not ask you to bind your future to mine. The death of my grandfather two years ago left me \$50,000, besides some real estate. I have a pleasant home on the Hudson—retired but elegant—where I would like to take you. What do you think, Gertrude? Could you be contented to leave your friends and live at Rose Cottage with me?"

My amazement allowed me to stammer nothing intelligible. In some distant way I temporized the matter, and begged Mr. Redmond to give me time for reflection.

He went away, making an appointment for the next evening.

So thunder struck was I by the revelation of Mr. Redmond's wealth that I wandered about the house in a dazed way, not heeding how mamma was fretting about Patricia, who had gone to ride with Mr. Sherrington.

"What is the matter, mamma. Is it going to storm?" I said at last.

"The storm? Nonsense! Where are your eyes, Gertrude? But it is nearly nine o'clock. Patricia has been gone seven hours with Mr. Sherrington, and I know something is wrong."

"What?" I demanded, arousing myself.

"I don't know."

Nine, ten, eleven and twelve o'clock passed. No carriage—no news.

At noon the next day the buggy drove into the yard. Patricia and Clyde Sherrington alighted. Patricia coolly presented her husband. They had been married the evening before, by our pastor at Lowbridge.

"So nice and quiet," said Patricia. "No fuss and no mortuary."

She took her place coolly at the table.

"You needn't hesitate to take Gage now, Gertrude; he's dead in love with you, and as I like Clyde best, I thought I'd decide the matter without any complications."

I think I was dumfounded. But I found my tongue when Mr. Redmond came in the evening, and said, "yes."

I give my experience for the benefit of others. It is dangerous loaning one's lover.

Minnie May's Department.

MY DEAR NIECES,—I am sure all who have been cherishing with tender care their favorite window box, hanging basket or stand of plants through the long, cold winter, experience a glow of pleasure as they look upon their little pets. Flowers may be counted amongst things which make homes most cheerful looking in winter time. But now thoughts of spring work and gardening come crowding upon us, making us long for the sweet, fresh, early days of warm sunshine that brings to us, from under the snow, our tulips, lilies, crocuses and all the lovely buds that we know are only awaiting for the soft south-west wind to bring them to life once more. We must await patiently for the good time to come, and in the meantime give a little extra care to our plants that are now looking so nicely. Let us dig around them, loosening the earth quite deep down in the pots, and give them a little ammonia, bone dust or lime, diluted in water, once a week. If dust has accumulated on them, give them a thorough bath. Watch for insects. To destroy them use tobacco water or carbolic soap suds, or else powder with helibore. To have plants ready for transplanting, we might sow in boxes seeds of phlox drummon petunias, dianthus and various others.

RECIPES.

CHICKEN CROQUETTES.

One large chicken; two sweet-breads; two ounces of butter; one wine glass of milk; one loaf of stale baker's bread; pepper, salt, parsley, onion and two eggs. Boil the chicken and sweet-breads separately until tender—saving the chicken broth. Chop both together very fine; season with pepper, salt, parsley and one teaspoonful of grated onion. Grate or rub bread until you have equal quantities of crumbs and chicken. Take as much chicken broth as will moisten the crumbs; add the milk, butter and let boil; then stir in the crumbs, mix with the meat and when sufficiently cool, stir in the two eggs, well beaten. Mold into croquettes; roll in crumbs or Indian meal and fry in lard.

CANDIED HONEY.

To prevent honey from candying after being strained from the comb, put it in a kettle over the fire, boil it gently, and as the scum rises skim it off until it becomes clear, when it can be turned in the vessel you wish to keep it in, where it will keep clear and fresh without candying. There are many persons who cannot eat new honey, but when so prepared no injurious effects will follow.