

is soon mended; there is now not the slightest likelihood that we shall ever see one another again. I regret very much that I should have seemed impertinent. Good morning, Miss Nettley."

He raised his hat, received a stiff bow in response, and was gone.

The little scene had happened so quickly that he could hardly believe it had not been all a dream. But half an hour ago he and his lady-love had been conversing like the oldest and best of friends. Now they were friends no longer, but something very like enemies. He cursed his folly again and again that he had been so precipitate, for, however angry he might be at the contempt with which his proposal had been treated, he felt with an irrepressible pang that he still loved the girl as fondly as ever. He had pride enough, however, not to linger after his curt dismissal. He left for London early the next morning.

And will it be believed that Miss Laura Nettley, member of the "best family in the country," went home in a shocking bad temper, though with all outward composure; that Lizzie, the maid, had a bad time of it that day, and that even the old Squire wondered what had happened to disturb his usually good-humoured and lively daughter?

It must also be stated that Miss Laura had a hearty fit of crying when she went to bed, and that she felt exceedingly miserable. The fact is that Miss Laura had made a discovery. She had never stopped to think whither she and Carlton were drifting the last few weeks, and the sudden declaration of love had thrown her off her guard and exposed the weakest side of her character. That she had merely meant to amuse herself with Carlton in the first instance is true enough; but it is also true that she had begun, in spite of herself, to like him exceedingly well; nay—why should we mince matters?—she was really almost as much in love with him as he with her. She had not till now suspected this, she would have denied that it was so but yesterday. What a mystery is the feminine mind!

Well, it was all over now. How miserably small, she reflected, that speech of hers about her family had been. She had no idea that such a contemptible thought could be in her mind; she had spoken as though Mr. Carlton had not been a gentleman. She would do anything now to make him believe that she really admired him. Was it not he who had wished for an introduction to her friends—to her father? If she could only set herself right with him she would be content, even if she never saw him afterwards. But it was all too late now, the mischief was done.

It seemed officious of Lizzie to announce that Mr. Carlton had left The Blue Fox—"been called to London on a sudden," the landlady said, and very sorry to part with such a good lodger.

And now the dull life at Lullington Hall returned, and by contrast with the pleasant weeks which were just gone seemed to one young lady more dreamy than ever. To take walks alone now was intolerably solitary; a dog was all very well, but—Then Mr. Carlton was such a brilliant talker, and seemed to know so much about everything; and he had been so ready, too, to listen to her, and this young lady flattered herself upon her conversation a good deal—it had all been delightful.

Thus it would seem that here were two people in love with each other; but, unhappily, Carlton thought that the lady scorned his addresses, and his pride was wounded too deeply for any further word to come from him, and Miss Nettley felt that she must be despised in his eyes. How could he, she said to herself—how could he continue to respect her?

### CHAPTER III.

The long summer, as it has a trick of doing, came to an end. Carlton, in London, was trying by dint of hard work to drive away all thought of his love; trying to forget, and succeeding as well, or as ill, as such people generally do. Miss Nettley was trying to forget too; to go back to the old life before she had known Carlton. Her studies became a weariness to the flesh; even her beloved violin failed to bring her comfort. The one tormenting thought that gave her no peace was that she had humiliated herself before Mr. Carlton, and she longed in her very pride to re-establish herself with him. At last she made a resolution; she would at least write and beg pardon for her rudeness. She had Carlton's card with his London address upon it. It had been kept with the greatest care I promise you. It cost a great struggle before the proud Miss Nettley could force herself to this apology, but at last it was done, and the letter was despatched. It is not good to triumph over the humiliation of one's friends, and I shall not give the letter here. There was nothing in it to be ashamed of; it was a simple expression of her feelings. She had been wrong and asked forgiveness.

But if no actual words of love were spoken in the letter, there was in it such a tender tone of regret and regard for Carlton as sent that gentleman into a very seventh heaven of joy and excitement. Where now was his resentment, his *amour propre*? He dashed off in a cab to the station, and in an hour's time was well on his way to Lullington.

The last stage of his journey was to ride atop of a lumbering old omnibus. Carlton's impatience would not brook the slow progress as Lullington was neared. He got down, and, sending his bag to the inn, struck across the fields. With the sight of old scenes and their associations all his love returned upon him a thousandfold. He fell into an exquisite day-dream as he walked.

His meditations were suddenly sent flying to the winds; Laura's dog was springing round him, uttering sharp barks of glad welcome, and here—oh, joy of joys!—advancing shyly to meet him was his divinity herself, with a rosy blush suffusing her charming face, and with a half-faltering timid manner so different from the proud carriage of three months back.

"I am glad to see you," she was beginning softly, but with such a light of love shining in the brown eyes that Carlton, crying out, "my darling, my darling!" caught her to his breast.

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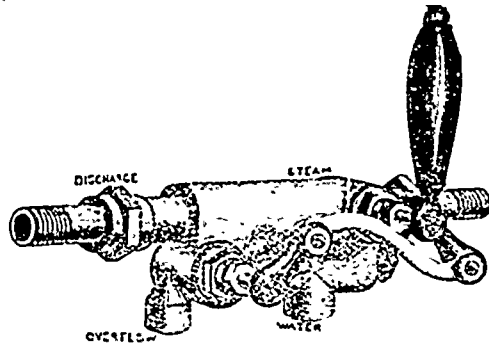
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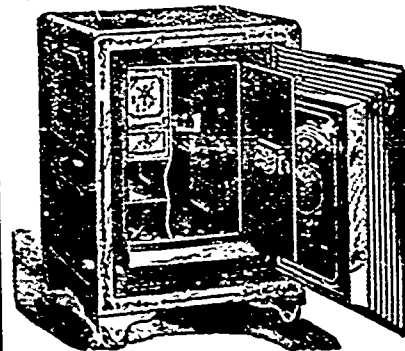
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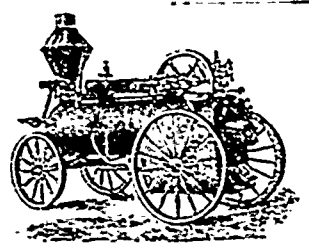
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