

Family Circle.

THAT SUMMER AT RICHFIELD.

Mrs. Hall—my Cousin Fanny—and I, sat contentedly, after lunch, before the fire. I was idly looking over the photograph-book, while Fanny ate an orange.

"Oh! who's that?" I exclaimed eagerly, at the sight of a young girl, looking back at me over her shoulder, with the sauciest, most piquant face imaginable. Fanny tipped her chair forward to see.

"That's Emily Van Buren," she answered. "My mate at school, and dearest friend ever since. Splendid girl, too! Clever, and warm hearted, and generous to a fault. Poor Emily! What a romantic, heart-rending time she did have! The nights I've lain awake, out of pure sympathy in her love affairs! My own never gave me half the trouble."

"I hope they turned out well."

"Depends on what you call well. Suppose I tell you the story and let you judge for yourself."

"The first piece of news," began Fanny, "that I heard on returning home, after my wedding-tour, was that Emily was engaged to Calvin Hard. We were living at A—then, and directly opposite the Van Burens. I never was more astounded. He had cared for her a long time, so at last she had consented, though I was sure she did not really love him. Her family had talked her into it. He was so cold, so dull, and narrow-minded, and in figure tall, stiff, and thin, with a pale, drab face; hair, eyes, and complexion, all of one colour. But there were excuses to be made for her. Her home was not a happy one, for father and mother, though high in social position, were constantly giving her to understand that they considered an unmarried girl as a failure in life; nay, more, as an actual burden and expense."

"Well, Emily was to be married in October. She looked pale and thin. So when, in July, James and I went to Richfield Spa, we persuaded her father to let her go with us. That's eight years ago. Emily anticipated so much pleasure, that she talked of it all the way up. Yet what should she do, the very first night, but have a terrible attack of pleurisy. Her room luckily opened into ours. James rushed out to get a doctor. The land-lord told him that there was a skillful, well-known physician in the house, Dr. Lambert. "As he stood with his said Fanny, staring into the fire, I can see him now," quiet, professional air; and poor Emily, with her magnificent hair tossed over the pillow, her face as white as the sheet, while she moaned and gasped for breath. The gray morning light was stealing into the room before Dr. Lambert ventured to leave, and then he left his patient under the influence of opiates. For days poor Emily did not leave her room; for weeks Dr. Lambert, as her physician, was watching over her, lest she should expose herself to drafts; forbidding her to dance, and ordering her quietly into the house when she was out on a damp evening. Emily used to pout, and rebel, and tell him that he was a tyrant; but she liked it for all that, I began at last to think.

"He was very nice, then?" I interrupted.

"Nice!" echoed Fanny. "He was one of the most accomplished and elegant men I have ever met. He looked about thirty-five, was of medium height, erect, and full of vigour. His face was not handsome, but it was refined and very strong. Everything gave you the impression of a tremendous reserve of force in him; his quiet, gray eyes, brimming with humour, as they were at times; his calm, marly voice; his easy stride. He had to a wonderful degree, that personal magnetism—Calvin Hard had the least—that mysterious, irresistible something, which is the distinguishing characteristic between the men who lead and those who follow. Here, then, was one who combined just those qualities to which Emily was most susceptible. He was the hero of her dreams in flesh and blood! What could she do, throw into almost hourly intercourse with him? Could a musician stop his ears if Beethoven were played to him? And the attraction was mutual. Something in one seemed always to respond perfectly to the other. The very thing that aroused Emily's attention was always what most struck him."

"I noticed, too, that, great as was the pleasure he took in her society, he guarded carefully against any flirtation. If Emily, going to her room to dress, found there a box of flowers for her hair, I, too, had the same. If at breakfast a delicious dish of fresh trout or game beside her plate met her astonished eyes, I fared equally well. His fees to the head cook must have been tremendous! If a package of new books or a magazine was sent to him, they were at Emily's disposal, or at mine the same. He and James, who had become fast friends, were always getting up delightful drives and excursions for us. I began to build up in my own mind—what, under the circumstances, I suppose I had no business to do—the finest castles in Spain, where Emily and the Doctor reigned in bliss, and where the very name of Hard was unknown. Poor castles! How they came down with a crash one day! I was dressing for a moonlight sail. To keep James from scolding me for being late, I kept up a chatter while buttoning my boots."

"How nice our little square parties are James dear!" I said. "And don't Emily and Dr. Lambert, go together like cup and saucer?" "If'n!" says he, putting on his gloves. "I think they do; but it's not best for a cup to have two saucers. If I were Mr. Hard, I think I should object to saucer number two. However, I suppose it's all right. Emily understands hers, if no doubt, and the Doctor's safe, being married." "Married! What do you mean?" I exclaimed, turning to look at my husband. "Why, of course he is," James answered coolly. "I wonder I hadn't spoke of it before. But I thought you knew it. Everybody does, and no doubt the Doctor himself thinks you do." "I don't then," I answered, emphatically,

sitting down with one boot in my hand. "Be so kind as to tell me what you and everybody—but Emily and me know."

"He plunged his hands down into his pockets, planting himself in the attitude of *Pan-A's* 'badgered witness,' in front of me. 'Now, then,' he said. 'The Doctor was married, to the best of my knowledge and belief, when he was twenty-five, to a young lady in London. There was insanity in her family on both sides of the house; but her husband was kept in ignorance of this fact. In a few months it developed itself, and on the very anniversary of their wedding day, the poor man had to take her to a lunatic asylum; and there she has remained, hopelessly insane, ever since, and that was a dozen years ago.' 'What a frightful thing!' said I, 'and how could he ever get over it?' 'It did all but kill him at first,' said James in his sympathy, sitting down by me. 'For years he went nowhere, except on professional business; only plunged day and night into work, as some men take to whisky in misery. Then, I suppose, he got used to it, and accepted it as inevitable. A gentleman, speaking of him yesterday, said he had borne it nobly and irreproachably; but he was more cheerful, and like his old self, this summer, than he had ever been since.' 'But is there no hope, James?' 'None. It is confirmed melancholia, almost idiocy now. But her health is perfect in other respects, and she is as likely to live to be a hundred, more likely, than any of us.' 'Dreadful!' said I. 'And of the two, I pity him more.'"

"Well, we went on our sail," continued Fanny, after pausing for a long breath. "But as I watched Emily and the Doctor rowing together in the moonlight, with murmurs of low talk, sometimes grave, sometimes gay, but always in accord, I sat silent in the stern of the boat, and could have cried."

"I told Emily that night. She was not easy to read sometimes, and whether it was secretly a shock to her or not, I could not tell. I noticed that she kept her face carefully in shadow. She only said, in a low voice, 'I knew there was something. He reined himself in so suddenly, sometimes, when we are alone together. In his very gayest moods, a fit of the deepest depression will come over him, and he will be *triste*, and silent, till I myself begin to feel as if some terrible weight were crushing me, as well as him.'"

"I was the most faithful, unwearied of chaperones; for though I, myself, had the most entire faith in both of them, the tabbies, I knew, soon were beginning to watch them with their slanderous eyes. 'James' said I, 'I wish, from my heart, we had never come here with Emily. Let us go away.' But he was stupid about such things; all men are. 'It was just a romantic notion of mine,' he said. The fact was, [he was having a good time, and wanted to stay."

"But the end came at last. One suffocating day the two gentlemen took us for a brouche over to the Lake for a breath of cool air, and a row at sunset. Afterwards we had a trout supper, in the rear, breezy, little inn-parlour, with its doors and windows opening on to the rippling lake, and the mountain walls of verdure that encircle it. I had determined to throw care to the winds, for that day, at least. Everybody was in the wildest spirits; and Emily and the Doctor kept up a perfect fire of wit across the table, amid peals of laughter from all. She was so pretty, I could not take my eyes off her, with her piquant head and animated gestures; a blue bow tucked coquettishly into her bright, chestnut hair; her round, full form in a white and cream morning-dress, turned slightly away from her softest and whitest of throats. Suddenly, up dashes a phaeton, with a pair of horses, to the door, and a tall, thin, drab man, in a gray travelling suit, gets out. Emily turned pale to her very lips as she rose to meet him. 'Ah! Calvin, this is a surprise,' she cried. 'When did you come?' Not one word of welcome could she force from her lover. Then she introduced Dr. Lambert. But Hard only bowed frigidity. 'Arrived at Richfield two hours ago,' said he to Emily, turning his back on the Doctor, and taking the seat beside her at table. 'This last in a low, significant tone that told that the tabbies had made the most of their time. 'I shall stay over Sunday, though I can hardly spare the time from business. 'Business before pleasure' is my motto, you know."

"With this new, discordant element, all brightness vanished from our party. In vain did the Doctor talk his very best—and he was a charming *raisonneur*—and James and I vie with each other to see which should appear merriest. Calvin's grim silence would have quenched Sancho Panza himself. Emily's face grew sadder every moment. If she had never realized before the fatal mistake of her engagement, I felt that she did now. And it takes the courage of a martyr to rectify such mistakes in a case like hers. I wonder if she would be brave enough before it would be forever too late; for, you see, October was so near."

"They brought, soon after dinner, our brouche to the door, and the phaeton, which, of course, Emily was to return in. How I pined her when I thought of the terrible ten-mile *tre-a-tte* with her sullen lover that was before her. They started first. Dr. Lambert stood, with a strangely thoughtful face, watching them till they were out of sight; then turned away, with a heavy sigh. 'So that is the man she is to marry. Heaven help her!' said he. 'Amen!' said I, fervently, and our eyes met."

"I think it was nearly morning before she went to bed. I felt the thunderstorm in the air, and could not sleep myself, and long after midnight, when I glanced out of my window, I saw, by the moonlight, Dr. Lambert pacing restlessly to and fro on the deserted terrace, his hands behind him, his head bowed down."

"When I was ready for breakfast, Emily answered my knock without opening the door. 'I have a terrible headache; I am not going down,' she said. At table, Calvin Hard's seat, next hers, was also vacant. Said the waiter, 'The gentleman had an early breakfast, but didn't eat nothin'; and he went by the first train.' James and I exchanged meaning looks. 'If the engagement is

broken,' said he, when the waiter had gone, 'I pity Emily. The Van Burens will never forgive Dr. Lambert, either, for Calvin Hard is said to be worth at least half a million.' 'She has done right, and I am heartily glad of it!' said I, too much excited to taste a mouthful."

"After our breakfast, which was very late that morning, I was sitting by myself on the terrace. From the saloon, where the band was playing, came the plaintive, delicious notes of Schumann's 'Trauweres,' which chimed well with my thoughts. Suddenly a low, husky voice at my side, said, 'Mrs. Hall!' I turned, amazed, when I found it was Dr. Lambert's. His face was full of strong emotion. He extended his hand. 'I have come to bid you good-bye,' he said."

"I knew why he was going, and I could not urge him to stay. I felt that he spoke only the truth when he said, earnestly, 'I have done wrong; I have stayed too long. My conscience has been telling me to go but the happiness of seeing her every day was so great, the temptation to keep it a little longer so strong. May Heaven forgive me! Now I am going back to my duty, and to my treadmill life.' As he said this, he set his lips like stone. I murmured heartfelt words of sympathy and friendship, but I think he hardly heard them. 'Will you take my farewell to her?' he said, at last, in a lower tone; and tell her, that if I never see her again—he stopped, then went on with an effort—I shall always thank her for her frank friendship. I owe to her the very brightest hours in a life that has not had too many in it."

"Then he wrung my hand, and turned away. I stooped down and kissed 'baby,' to his tears. By-and-bye, I went to Emily's room. Her face showed that she had been going through so much, that I trembled for her, when I told her Dr. Lambert had gone, and gave her his message. She did not say one word, but great tears filled her eyes, and she hid her face in the pillows. I caressed her without speaking, till she held up her left hand to me significantly. Then I saw that her engagement-ring was gone. 'You have given it back?' I asked. 'Yes, last night, when we were driving. Oh, Fanny! she exclaimed, vehemently, throwing her arms round me, while her eyes flashed with a fire that startled me—'Oh! Fanny, at least I can thank Dr. Lambert that I have learned, in time, the danger there is in marrying a man you do not care for; that some day you may wake up, and find there is a man whom you love!'"

"But Fanny, how did Calvin bear it?" I asked.

"My cousin looked at me earnestly. I knew she was reading my thoughts."

"He was very angry and bitter against her, Kate, for awhile. One could hardly expect anything else, you know. It's no little thing to break an engagement. But, dear me, a man doesn't die of it. In six months he married a pretty little widow, and lived happily ever after," as the story-books say."

"Poor Emily it was, who had the hardest time of all. Her family made her life wretched for her. Then her father died, and, to everybody's surprise, left his estate heavily encumbered. I think Emily was glad, when she found that she had got to choose between going away to support herself, or staying idly at home, with grinding economy. Of course, it was like her to choose the former, with eagerness. Work and independence forever! she wrote me. She drew exquisitely; it was her great accomplishment. By James's advice, she came to London. We were living here then and learned drawing on wood. In time she became very skilful, and was able to support herself handsomely. She lived a very quiet, industrious life, with an aim of hers here, and did not care to visit at all, except at our house. I used to tell her sometimes that I wished that I could see some of her bright ecstasies ways come back. 'You never will,' she would answer, soberly. 'I feel sometimes, Fanny, as if I were a hundred!' But that was nonsense, for she was barely twenty-seven, and with her perfect health had never been prettier or more attractive in her life."

"When we went abroad last year, and proposed her going with us, I was delighted to see with what zest she entered into the plan. The voyage, which to me was purgatory, to her was paradise; for she was not sick a day. And when I lay groaning in my berth, she and Colonel Gade were pacing the deck together by the hour, exulting in the roll and toss of the sea. Every day she grew more like her own, sparkling self. Colonel Gade was a young Prussian officer, whom James introduced to her on the second day out. His uncle—a wealthy banker in London—was an old friend of my husband's. The Colonel was tall and handsome, with frank, honest, blue eyes, warm-hearted, brave, and good, and he had the most charming manners."

"He had been travelling in this country for his health, and was now returning to his home in Berlin. Emily's German was bad, but as he told her, his English was worse. He besought her to teach him, and the merry, musical little laughs she gave at his blunders seemed to afford him infinite pleasure. I think he fell in love with her from the very first. His polite, foreign ways, and the entertainment their lessons afforded, made her receive his attentions at first with a frank pleasure, that deepened into another feeling by slow degrees."

"When we were in Paris, Colonel Gade was with us constantly. After that, we separated; but when we arrived in Berlin, the first person to greet us at the hotel was our handsome Colonel. It was one of those sudden, romantic affairs that just takes one off one's feet. I never cared for foreigners, or approved of foreign matches; yet, in six weeks after we came to Berlin, I was present at Emily's marriage, and I kissed her glowing cheek with a heart full of joy at the bright future before her."

"The young couple went to Switzerland for their wedding journey. Two days ago I had such a bright, charming letter from her! I really don't think you could find a happier wife in all Berlin than Emily Gade."

"And Doctor Lambert?" I asked.

Fanny's voice trembled a little.

"He died last year, in London, of typhus fever, caught in a hospital for poor children, to which he had been the generous patron, as well as chief of the visiting staff, for years."