

NEW DOMINION MONTHLY.

NOVEMBER, 1872.

FRANC LESTER.

It was a cold, cheerless evening in November. Dr. McAlpine sat in his office enjoying a cigar and the evening paper, when the door opened and John Earle walked in. He was a man about thirty, with a tall, massive frame, cool gray eyes, and a finely formed head, about which thick brown hair clung in close curls: altogether he was a man to be admired—so far, at least, as appearance goes.

"Good evening, John. Disagreeable night this. Come to the fire and make yourself comfortable."

Allan McAlpine's office was a cozy place; and Earle threw himself into an easy chair put his feet in another, and prepared to enjoy it.

"Can't offer you a cigar, old fellow, for I know how you hate tobacco," said the Doctor rising; "but I know what you will take,—and I rather think by your looks you need it to-night;" and he brought out a bottle of brandy.

"Thank you Mac," said John as he took a glass; "I've had a miserable headache all day; but this will make me all straight—nothing like it for me."

"I told you so when I prescribed it a year ago. How is Miss Kate to-night?"

"Very well. Oh, by the way, we have taken a boarder; or rather Kate has. I had nothing to do in the arrangement."

"Who is it?"

"Miss Lester, the new teacher in the Seminary. You should come over and see her, Mac—a frail, delicate-looking little being, only eighteen, with a wistful look in her face that goes straight to your heart."

"I've got one woman's face in my heart already, so I guess I had better not expose myself to her fascinations. Look out for yourself, John."

"Don't talk of her in that way, Allan McAlpine; she is only a child. Besides, I hope I am master of my own heart."

"Verily, if ever man was, you are."

In the meantime, Miss Kate Earle was making the acquaintance of her boarder, in the dear old farmhouse which had sheltered her and John all their lives; and where, as soon as she was old enough, he was very proud to install her as mistress.

Franc Lester was an orphan; and had neither brother nor sister. Her father had been a country physician, who died a drunkard's death when she was only nine years old. Her mother died in less than a year after, leaving her to the care of a wealthy uncle in the city. He educated her as if she had been his own, paying little heed, however, to the principles which were instilled into her young mind. She was a gentle, quiet child, whose ruling passion, indeed whose only passion, seemed to be an intense hatred to strong drink.

At her first appearance in society she firmly, her uncle said rudely, refused to taste wine. He remonstrated with her, telling her that as long as she was his child she must conform to the usages of society; and she quietly replied that she would do anything to please him, except drink wine.—she could not do that. It all ended in her answering an advertisement for a teacher in the Seminary at Denton.

The two girls made a pretty picture, as