

myself the very next trip of the Headlight."

Mrs. Colby was perfectly willing, and said so in a few words; but in regard to another matter she was very loquacious.

"I knew I was right about Silas Marmaduke," she said. "All I told you of him was true, and more. He talked the matter over with me this morning and said he admired you more than any other woman he had ever seen; that he had never met with your *type* before, and that he intended to ask you to marry him."

Olivia's heart, accustomed to beat with great regularity, stood still in her bosom. A sensation of extreme delight spread through her whole being. She seemed motionless and silent for a moment and then broke out in a sort of ecstasy, "Oh, Fannie, Fannie! does he *really* love me? It makes me so *very, very* happy to think of it!"

"Of course he does, and it will be a grand thing for you. He is not so very rich, but he is a good speaker and goes in the best society, and that investment in the Lasker county land was not so bad after all."

"Was it not?" asked Olivia mechanically, not knowing or caring what she said.

"No," was the answer, "the taxes never amounted to much, and he is slowly putting it into cultivation. But of course he will tell you all about that himself, so I'll go now and send him word that you have returned, as I promised to do when we parted."

Olivia made but a faint protest against such summary action. She escaped to her room and relapsed into a state as dreamy as if induced by sleep. How noble was this man's exterior! How well he suited her taste! How thoroughly he seemed to come up to her standard! Was she really to have his love?

He came in the evening, and she went forward to meet him, blushing deeply, but without a shade of coquetry in her manner or tone of voice. To say that Silas Marmaduke had a well-proportioned form and regular features, was to express most poorly the secret of the impression he had made on Olivia Rothwell. His intellect was not highly cultivated, but it was clear and strong. Men taught him history and politics and from women he essayed to learn romance and religion. His youth had known no struggles and his self-confidence had never been checked. There was a vigor and originality about him that made him at all times conspicuous among his fellows.

Olivia, on her part, had sprung from a highly intellectual race. There had been historians, philosophers and poets among her ancestors, and almost from the beginning of her life she had lived in a world of books, inheriting ideas and opinions that infused a spirit of analysis into her natural enthusiasm. She was thoroughly refined, but innocently unconventional. Affinity between such characters was not unnatural.

"I have not lost one moment in coming," said Marmaduke when he had seated himself beside her. "An absence, short in one sense of the word, has shown me plainly that my happiness is no longer in my own keeping, but entirely with you. I have longed to tell you that I love you, and earnestly to supplicate your love in return."

"Are you sure of this?" asked Olivia in a voice tremulous with emotion.

"Why should I doubt it," was his reply, "and why should you? I do not see, indeed, how *any* man, not already

interested elsewhere, can come in contact with you and not feel as I do. With you it may be different. I have been tormented with fears that you have loved some one before I saw you. Do tell me that such is not the case."

"I have never been in love——" She was about to say "before," but she paused.

"Say until *now*," exclaimed Marmaduke, eagerly, "and make me feel supremely happy!"

Olivia sat silent a moment, with her head averted; then turning towards Marmaduke with great earnestness in her clear, soft eyes she said, "I am wondering if we know what love really is?"

"I have learned my lesson thoroughly," he replied, "and you have been my teacher. Miss Rothwell! Olivia! Do not keep me in suspense. May I not hope to win your love?"

"I long to give it to you," she answered gently, "but I must think; I must be sure. Real, pure love is so holy, so wonderful. Do not let us trifle with it."

Her mood was strange to him—very different from what he had anticipated. His expectation had been to receive some expression of tenderness from her—to press her hand—nay, more—her lips. Now the denouement had come, she seemed more like a spirit hovering just out of his reach than a living, breathing woman by his side.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I see I am unworthy of you!"

"It does not seem so to *me*," she said; "far from it! I have seen no one so handsome, so noble, so agreeable, as you are!"

"And yet you will not say you love me?"

"Not now," and there was a real sadness in her tone. "I am afraid. Will you wait for me?"

"Unquestionably I will. But oh, Olivia, let it not be long!"

Marmaduke had entered Mrs. Colby's house an eager, sanguine lover. He left it in two hours, a restless, disappointed man, but his resolution was even stronger to win Olivia Rothwell. She, before going to rest wrote to her mother in this manner, "I am so excited I can scarcely hold my pen. Mr. Silas Marmaduke, of whom I've written you in terms of admiration, has just asked me to be his wife. Of course I would not accept him without writing to you first, but that is not all. It is too sudden for me to make up my mind. I must know him better and so must he me. Marriage is so very serious! How can people speak of it lightly? But to be in doubt and uncertainty is very painful. Mr. Marmaduke urged me to say I loved him. I asked him to wait, and he consented. Oh, dear mother, it was well he left me when he did. I felt myself yielding, I could not have resisted him much farther. He is so gallant, so elegant. It seems to me I would not have him look or talk differently for worlds! I know I am doing right in declining to decide, however, and am glad I'm going back to the country tomorrow, where I can think it all over, without seeing him. I know what you will say. That is, 'try and do your duty.' Before heaven, I will!"

Marmaduke met her at the wharf next day, and, assisting her and Mrs. Colby from the carriage, went with them on board the steamboat. Other friends were in waiting in the lilliputian cabin to pay their respects to Miss Rothwell.

"What a strange fancy of yours to leave town just at Easter!" said a Wakefield belle who was fashionably religious. "The greatest objection to the country is the dearth of church privileges."

"And of society," said Mrs. Colby. "I was once a whole