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JULIET.*

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CHAPTER XVIII.

A WEDDING IN MAY.

THERE was one person to whom the news of Cecil Travers's engagement came as a great shock, and that was Gretchen Rudenbach.

It was in a letter from Wattie that Gretchen first heard of it, for Cecil himself was too full of his new happiness to give a thought to the poor little music-teacher in Pimlico.

When Gretchen had finished reading Wattie Ellison's letter, she laid her head down upon the table-cloth, all among her poor little breakfast array, her cup of weak tea, and her untempting-looking bread-and-butter, and cried bitterly.

In the middle of these tears, in came Miss Pinkin.

Miss Pinkin wore a black front, and a tulle cap decorated with small lilac bows and tied under the chin with white gauze ribbons, and she was enveloped in a silk shawl of an old-fashioned pattern and colour, very tightly drawn around her spare figure; she had a thin, angular face, and was altogether an austere-looking woman.

"Mercy me!" exclaimed this ancient virgin, lifting up both hands in amazement at the discovery of Gretchen in her woe. "What on earth are you crying your eyes out for?" Gretchen wiped her eyes, but made no answer.

"I know very well what you are crying for," continued Miss Pinkin, glancing severely at the open letter on the table. "You are crying about a piece of news that ought to give you a great deal of pleasure, if you had a well-regulated mind. I, too, have had a letter from Miss Augusta Ellison, my old pupil, and she tells me that Mr. Cecil Travers is engaged to be married to Miss Blair of Sotherne. You ought to be very much pleased, you foolish girl, instead of crying like a waterspout, and laying your head down in your bread-and-butter plate, which isn't cleanly."

Gretchen, at this well-merited reproach, lifted her head and pushed away the bread-and-butter to a safe distance.

"Because a young gentleman, *far* above you in station, has been kind to you when you were ill and homeless, you have been so silly as to allow your thoughts to dwell upon him in an indecorous manner."

"You should not say that, Miss Pinkin."

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