

forenoon I passed until I handed Alice into the carriage, and drove down the gravelled walk and thence into the road. It was a glorious afternoon, earth and sky appeared to vie with each other to charm and delight the spectator, and Alice was unusually vivacious and happy. But I—selfish fellow—had my mind too much engrossed with my own, not over pleasant thoughts, to pay any attention to either. To all her attempts to draw me into a conversation, I responded only in monosyllables, until she, losing all patience, exclaimed poutingly:

"Dear me, what a very old Solomon you have suddenly become! I ought certainly to feel very much flattered by the amount of attention you have shown me since we left the house; I believe you have not said two words except 'yes' and 'no' during the whole time!"

"Pardon me, Miss Graham; I did not intend to slight you. In fact my thoughts have been so taken up with a matter of pressing importance that I almost forgot —."

"That there even so much as existed such a person as I!"

"Far from it," I replied. "On the contrary, it was of you and, I might say, you alone that I have been thinking for the last hour at least."

"Is it possible? You really alarm me! To think that I should be the subject of such grave and silent deliberation! It's positively awful!"

"But nevertheless true," I returned. "And now would you not like to know what I have been thinking about concerning you?"

"I must confess to a little curiosity on this point; only I hope it is not anything unpleasant or serious?"

"Unpleasant it need not be, unless you choose to make it so; but as to its being serious, I believe it is a very serious matter, indeed, to one at least that I know of."

"And that is —?"

"That is a certain individual who once left the smoky, dusty city, where was his home, to find a purer air and brighter sky at Rosemount. I need not say that he was delighted beyond measure with everything he saw there, and more especially with a blue-eyed, golden-haired maiden, who appeared so very beautiful and good in his eyes that he learned to love her. And wished in his heart that she would consent to become his own little wife, and thus make his lonely cheerless life bright and joyous. Can you guess the name of her of whom I speak?"

"Yes, I think I can; and yet —."

Alice paused, as if at a loss how to proceed, while a crimson flush rose to her cheek and spread over her face. Noticing her embarrassment I continued,

"Now do you not think that it would be very cruel and heartless on the part of this maiden if, under these circumstances, she refused to comply with so simple a request? Do you think that you, if similarly situated, could act thus?"

"That would depend a good deal upon who this poor broken-hearted lover happened to be," returned Alice, with a little laugh, while she vainly attempted to conceal her blushes by in-

clining her head forward until her glossy ringlets almost hid her glowing cheeks from view.

"Ah! then I shall tell you who he is:—he is my brother, William."

"Your brother!" she repeated with a start, the color vanishing from her face as she spoke and giving place to a sudden pallor; and the blue eyes were turned to me with an enquiring, troubled look. "Sure, it is not of him you speak?"

"It is indeed," I returned: "nor do I see anything surprising in the fact. Perhaps you wonder that he is not here in person, instead of sending another to act for him in this affair, but the demands of his business rendered such a course necessary. And I feel assured that you will not allow this circumstance, unavoidable as it was, to cause you to look with disfavor upon my brother's proposal."

"Were it possible for me to receive your brother's proposal, probably this would not make any difference, but that I cannot do. It would be wrong in me to even encourage a hope which could never possibly be realized. And now let us return home, for I do not feel like driving further this afternoon."

I turned the horse's head in the direction of Rosemount, and as we drove homewards I entreated her to think more favorably of the matter, but she politely, yet firmly declined hearing anything further concerning it,—she had already made up her mind, and any present or future discussion of the subject would be at once useless on my part, and unpleasant on hers.

After this, but few words passed between Alice and I until we arrived at Rosemount cottage, and when I handed her from the carriage she passed by me with a simple "Thank you," and entered the house. I did not see her again until tea-time when she appeared at the table looking very grave and reserved. The meal was a very quiet one, and when it was over Alice excused herself and left the room. I remained for some time conversing with the Squire and his better half, and then taking my hat, I walked out into the open air.

Without knowing or caring whither my steps led me, I wandered at random up and down the walks and paths belonging to the place. My brain was very busy in turning over the events of the afternoon. I could not help wondering at the sudden change that had taken place in Alice's manner on the mention of my brother's name. It was evident that she imagined I referred to some other person, but to who else could my words be taken to refer? There was only one such that I could think of, and that was—*myself*! I, like William, had left the city, and had stayed, or rather was staying, at Rosemount; and thus the remarks made in my conversation with Alice that afternoon were almost equally applicable to my brother's case and to my own: hence the mistake.

From this reverie I was aroused by hearing a sob close by. I stopped and, looking up, found myself standing before a summer-house,