

way it is with men, and could be safely backed, in a fair field with a fair start against any girl of her age and station in the country. So much for Margarita's purpose at the outset of a day destined to be an eventful one in her life.

Ramona's purpose was no less clear. She had decided, after some reflection, that she would not speak to the Senora about Margarita's having been under the willows with Alessandro in the previous evening, but would watch her carefully and see whether there were any further signs of her attempting to have a clandestine interview with him.

This course she adopted, she thought chiefly because of her affection for Margarita and her unwillingness to expose her to the Senora's displeasure, which would be great and terrible to bear. She was also aware of an unwillingness to bring anything to light which would reflect ever so lightly upon Alessandro in the Senora's estimation.

"And he is not really to blame," thought Ramona, "if a girl follows him about and makes free with him. She must have seen him at the willows, and gone down there on purpose to meet him, making a pretext of the washing. For she never in this world would have gone to wash in the dark, as he must have known, if he were not a fool. He is not the sort of person it seems to me to be fooling with maids. He seems as full of grave thought as Father Salvierderra. If I see anything amiss in Margarita to day I shall speak to her myself, kindly but firmly, and tell her to conduct herself more discreetly."

Then, as the other maiden's had done, Ramona's thoughts, being concentrated on Alessandro, altered a little from their first key, and grew softer and more imaginative, strangely enough taking some of the phrases, as it were, out of the other maiden's mouth.

"I never saw such eyes as Alessandro has, she said. 'I wonder any girl should make free with him. Even I myself, when he fixes his eyes on me, feel a constraint. There is something in them like the eyes of a saint, so solemn, yet so mild. I am sure he is very good.'"

And so the day opened; and if there were abroad in the valley that day a demon of mischief, let loose to tangle the skeins of human affairs, things could not have fallen out better for his purpose than they did; for it was not yet ten o'clock of the morning when Ramona, sitting at her embroidery in the veranda, half hid behind the vines, saw Alessandro going with his pruning-knife in his hand towards the artichoke patch at the east of the garden, and joining the almond orchard. "I wonder what he is going to do there," she thought. "He can't be going to cut willows;" and her eyes followed him till he disappeared among the trees.

Ramona was not the only one who saw this. Margarita, looking from the east window of Father Salvierderra's room, saw the same thing. "New's my chance!" she said; and throwing a white rosette coquettishly over her head, she slipped around the corner of the house. She ran swiftly in the direction in which Alessandro had gone. The sound of her steps reached Ramona, who, lifting her eyes, took in the whole situation at a glance. There was no possible duty, no possible message, which would take Margarita there. Ramona's cheeks blazed with a disproportionate indignation. But she bethought herself, "Ah, the Senora may have sent her to call Alessandro!" She rose, went to the door of Felipe's room, and looked in. The Senora was sitting in the chair by Felipe's bed, with her eyes closed. Felipe was dozing. The Senora opened her eyes, and looked inquiringly at Ramona.

"Do you know where Margarita is?" said Ramona.

"In Father Salvierderra's room, or else in the kitchen, helping Marda,"

replied the Senora, in a whisper. "I told her to help Marda with the peppers this morning."

Ramona nodded, returned to the veranda, and sat down to decide on her course of action. Then she rose again, and going to Father Salvierderra's room, looked in. The room was still in disorder. Margarita had left her work there unfinished. The color deepened on Ramona's cheeks. It was strange how accurately she divined each process of the incident. "She saw him from this window," said Ramona, "and has run after him. It is shameful. I will go and call her back, and let her see that I saw it all. It is high time that this was stopped."

But once back in the veranda, Ramona halted and seated herself in her chair again. The idea of seeming to say was revolting to her.

"I will wait here till she comes back," she said, and took up her embroidery. But she could not work. As the minutes went slowly by she sat with her eyes fixed on the almond orchard where first Alessandro and then Margarita had disappeared. At last she could bear it no longer. It seemed to her already a very long time. It was not in reality very long—a half hour or so, perhaps; but it was long enough for Margarita to have made great headway, as she thought, in her talk with Alessandro, and for things to have reached just the worst possible crisis at which they could have been surprised, when Ramona suddenly appeared at the orchard gate, saying, in a stern tone, "Margarita, you are wanted in the house!" At a bad crisis, indeed, for everybody concerned. The picture which Ramona had seen as she reached the gate was this: Alessandro, standing with his back against the fence, his right hand hanging listlessly down, with the pruning knife in it, his left hand in the hand of Margarita, who stood close to him, looking up in his face with a half-saucy, half-loving expression. What made bad matters worse was, that, at the first sight of Ramona, Alessandro snatched his hand from Margarita's and tried to draw farther off from her, looking at her with an expression which, even in her anger, Ramona could not help seeing was one of disgust and repulsion. And if Ramona saw it, how much more did Margarita! Saw it, felt it, as only a woman repulsed in presence of another woman can see and feel. The whole thing was over in the twinkling of an eye; the telling it takes double, treble the time of the happening. Before Alessandro was fairly aware what had befallen, Ramona and Margarita were disappearing from view under the garden trellis—Ramona walking in advance, stately, silent, and Margarita following, sulky, abject in her gate, but with a raging whirlwind in her heart.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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With much regret we record the death of Mrs. Griffin, the esteemed wife of Mr. P. D. Griffin, T. C., the Square, Listowel, which occurred somewhat suddenly on January 27, at her residence, the cause of death being an acute attack of paralysis.

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