

she think there was the least ground for Fanny's supposition, and she desired her husband to say so.

"I cannot say so, and tell the truth," said Mr. Miller; "but I can assure you that Bill Jeffrey's sled had nothing to do with it."

"What was it, then?" asked Kate and Fanny both, in the same breath.

Mr. Miller drew Fanny towards him with the freedom of an elder brother, and in a low, earnest tone, said: "Did nothing else occur during my visit, which could have changed my opinion of you?"

Fanny lifted her large, blue eyes to Mr. Miller's face with so truthful, and wondering a gaze, that he was puzzled. "Can it be," thought he, "that I did not hear aright, that I was deceived? I will, at least, ask her how she spent that evening," so he said: "Fanny, do you remember where you were, or how you were occupied during the last evening of my stay at your father's?"

At first, Fanny seemed trying to recall the events of that night: then she said: "Oh, yes, I remember now perfectly well. You and Mr. Wilmot had letters to write, and went to your room early, while father and mother went to one of the neighbor's, leaving Julia and me alone in the sitting-room."

"Did you both remain in the sitting-room, during the evening?" continued Mr. Miller.

"Yes," said Fanny; "or, that is, I staid there all the time; but Julia was gone a long time, and when she returned she would not tell me where she had been."

"But were not you and Luce in your own room at all, that evening?" continued Mr. Miller.

"Luce!" said Fanny; "I do not remember having seen her once that night; neither was I in my own room until bed-time."

There was so much frankness and apparent truth in Fanny's face and manner, that Mr. Miller never for a moment doubted her. His first feeling was one of intense happiness, at finding that Fanny was, indeed, all he had once fancied her to be. Back through the channels of his heart rolled, for an instant, the full tide of his once secretly nurtured affection for her. It was for an instant, however; for, one look at the beautiful Kate, convinced him that the love he once bore the gentle, timid girl at his side, was nought, when compared with the deep, ardent affection which he now felt for his own cherished wife. "Fanny," said he, "I have wronged you in thought, but never in word or deed, to my knowledge. I was, however, grossly deceived, although I can see no object for the deception."

"What can you mean?" asked Kate, rather anxiously. "Do explain yourself, and not deal in mysteries any longer. What dreadful thing did you imagine Fanny had done?—set the stables on fire, or abused the blacks—which?"

Mr. Miller did not immediately answer; and Fanny said: "Come, Mr. Miller, it is not fair to suspect of something evil and not tell what it is."

"I will tell you," said Mr. Miller; and, in a few words as possible, he repeated to Fanny the conversation which he had overheard, between Luce and herself, as he supposed.

When he finished speaking, both Kate and Fanny were silent for a moment; then Kate said: "It was Julia, I know it was. Did you never

notice how much alike their voices are? And, besides, I once heard Julia lay a wager with Mr. Raymond that she could imitate her sister's voice so exactly, that one, not seeing her, would be thoroughly deceived."

"Oh, Mrs. Miller," said Fanny, "it cannot be! Why should Julia do so wicked a thing? And yet I now remember that when I was sick, Luce came to me one night and asked me to forgive her for everything bad she had ever done to me. I assured her I knew of nothing to forgive; and then she cried, and said I did not know all she did about her wickedness. She must have referred to that night. I can forgive her; for she is a poor ignorant girl, and much afraid of Julia. But how could my own sister do me so great a wrong, and what could have been her object?"

Here Fanny burst into tears, while Kate gave vent to her indignation by expressing her opinion pretty freely of Miss Julia.

"I can see," said she, "what Julia's object was. I fancy she was always fearful lest my brother should like Fanny the best; and she probably took this method to make you both think meanly of Fanny."

"Your idea is, probably, the correct one," said Mr. Miller, who would have added more; but Kate interrupted him by saying, "Yes, I think I understood it all now. Julia is, probably, at the foundation of Dr. Lacey's neglect. Most likely she's been writing him some base falsehood."

"Dr. Lacey's neglect!" repeated Mr. Miller. "What do you mean?"

Kate commenced an explanation, but Fanny started up, saying: "Please, Mrs. Miller, wait until I am gone."

She then quitted the apartment, and sought her own room, of which Julia had been sole occupant for more than an hour. On her return from school, this hopeful young lady was pleased to find her sister absent. Seating herself near the window, with paper and pencil, she began the composition of that letter, which, as we have seen, widened the breach between Dr. Lacey and Fanny. This unhallowed work cost her a world of pains. Many times were the lines crossed out and rewritten, before they quite suited her. The letter was but half completed, when Fanny was heard coming slowly through the window out upon the balcony, and by the time Fanny reached the room, she was seated at the furthest end of the verandah, busily engaged with her forgery.

When she at last returned to her room, and tried to converse with her sister, she observed that Fanny shrank from her approach and that she had been weeping. In a very ironical tone Julia said, "What now is the matter? I declare, Fan, I believe you are a perfect little simpleton. I wouldn't be such a cry-baby, any way; and make so much fuss about one good-for-nothing Doctor."

Fanny replied very calmly, and without once taking her eyes from her sister's face, "If you think I have been crying about Dr. Lacey, you are mistaken."

"Pray what did you cry for?" said Julia, laughingly. "Did somebody look sideways at you, or omit to call you by some pet baby name?"

"I cried," said Fanny, "because I feared you had been acting very wickedly towards me."

In an instant Julia's assurance left her. The