

"You modest little appraiser! But he ought to do no less, after all the pains you took with him."

"Pains! O, it was very pleasant. I liked teaching, and he liked learning."

She gathered her flowers together again, and slowly rose to her feet.

"You will be seventeen next month," said Mr. Hesketh, after a pause of consideration. "What do you say, Caroline, to the idea of a ball on your birth-day?"

"O?" Her eyes sparkled, the pensive curve of her lips relaxed into the gayest smile. "Do you really mean it, uncle?"

"I do, really. Well, I think I see what you would say to it. You approve?"

"I should think so. And so will Vaughan, I am sure; do not you?" Half doubtfully, though, she sought his face.

"We will ask him. If he doesn't like it, he may lock himself in his room while the event takes place; for we'll have a ball, Caroline. You shall write the invitations to-morrow."

"O!" she cried again, in ecstasy, unable to say more. Yet the next thought rose to her lips, "I hope Vaughan will like it," clouding the perfect sunshine.

"Pshaw!" cried Mr. Hesketh, laughing, half impatiently; "he isn't so foolish as not to like it. And, be that as it may, we'll settle the preliminaries to-morrow; and you shall tell Mrs. Brownlow what menaces her; break it to her by degrees, that she will have to take up the dining-room carpet, decorate the walls, wax the floor, and provide supper for sixty people at least."

"Poor Mrs. Brownlow!" said Caroline, spinning round on the grass, in uncontrollable glee.

"And above and beyond all,—O female vanity!" went on the old gentleman, "you shall choose a dress for the occasion. What shall it be? Gossamer and spangles? Pink satin and gold lace? Or the costume of a heroine—simple white muslin, with one rose in your hair!"

"Neither—neither!" she cried, with a ringing laugh. "I will frighten you, it shall be so gorgeous, and I will ruin you, it shall cost so much! I will dream of it all to-night, and tell you what it is to be in the morning."

She ran off, again singing as she ran, to pluck some sprays from a great myrtle bush that grew under the window of the room that was always called Vaughan's room.

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(To be continued.)