

convivial club, composed chiefly of young men, who passed the evening in singing songs, smoking, and drinking. This they called enjoying life, but it was a queer sort of enjoyment; for on leaving the public-house late at night, they could scarcely stand or walk, and often staggered into horse ponds, or muddy ditches, from which they did not get out again without a great deal of trouble. And then, when they woke the next morning, instead of feeling fresh and ready for work, their heads ached, they had pains and twitches in every limb, and a nasty hot bitter taste in their throats, which made them miserable for the whole of the day; and this was enjoying life! Philip's happy disposition made him the leader of the club; he was foremost in all the fun and merriment. On first going to work at Lappington, he had walked over two or three times to the village where the club met, and contrived to get back to his work the next day without exciting any suspicion; but as soon as he became acquainted with Mary, he went no more to the meetings, and, except at times a glass of ale, gave up drinking altogether; it seemed that his love for her overcame every lower feeling. The repairs at the old house lasted nearly half a year, when Philip was sent to begin a similar job ten or twelve miles away in another direction. It was hard parting with Mary, but he came to see her as often as he could, scarcely ever missing a Sunday. So it went on for several months; at last the wedding-day was fixed, and on the morning with which our tale opens they were to be married.

It had been agreed that Philip should ride over in time to go with the party to church. What a pleasant scene was that in Mary's little parlor; the miller had put on his best suit—his new top-boots, and blue coat with bright buttons, and came up to give her away, accompanied by one of his daughters as bride's-maid. He had a kind and hearty word for everybody, and said that he felt as frolicsome as a school-boy. He declared that Mary looked prettier than ever in her wedding-dress, and when the bells all at once struck up their merry peal, he snapped his fingers and hummed a tune by way of chorus. The miller's cheerfulness was so contagious, as at first to prevent any one remarking, that the time fixed on for going to church was passed, by a quarter-of-an-hour. Mary became anxious and fancied that some accident had happened; the miller, however, laughed at her fears; and the bride's-maid whispered that on such an occasion a little impatience was excusable. Still Mary could not feel satisfied, as another quarter-of-an-hour went by without bringing Philip, the roses vanished from her cheek and gave place to a melancholy paleness. At last, just as the clerk came in from the church, to inquire as to the delay, the noise of a vehicle was heard at the end of the village street, and voices outside exclaimed eagerly—'here he is—here he is!' 'All right now,' said the clerk, 'better late than never;' but as he spoke, there came a strange discord of shouting and laughter, mingled with the rattle of wheels. What could it mean? Before the question could be answered, a chaise stopped at the door, four young men jumped out, and one of them, hurrying before the others, reeled into the room, where the party were waiting. It was Philip; but what a sight for a bride! He had a stupid grin on his face, and hiccuped and stammered in his attempts to speak; trying, however, to look grave and sober, but breaking out at times in a drinking-chorus, in which he was joined by his companions, who had staggered in after him. 'Come, ducky,' he managed to say at last to Mary, while he held by her chair to save himself from falling; 'come, ducky, a'n't you ready?' But the shock to her feelings was too great; the poor girl had fainted.—The miller's anger now broke out:—'Philip!' he exclaimed, 'how dare you show yourself in that state! Off with you, man; you are drunk,' and with the assistance of the clerk, he pushed the besotted young men out of the house. Philip

was too giddy and bewildered to offer any resistance; his companions bore him off with a jovial song, and in a few minutes drove off as rapidly as they had come.

Here was a disappointment: the whole village was in a state of consternation; who could have thought it? Still even those who had been in the secret of Philip's misdoings had too much respect for Mary to say, 'they thought how it would be.' Poor girl! she who a short hour before had been so happy in the prospect of her marriage, and receiving the congratulations of her friends! When she recovered from her swoon, the rector, who had heard of what had happened while waiting at the church, came in and endeavored to soothe her with the consolations most likely to be effectual at such a trying moment. But the bright sky, the green fields, the bees and flowers, everything seemed at once to have lost its charms for her. The miller in his honest indignation against the author of so much anguish, insisted that she should go and stay with his wife and daughters for a day or two; until, as he said, they saw the upshot.

Mary's native good sense, assisted by the generous sympathy of friends, enabled her in some degree to overcome the shock to her feelings. The sun was just dropping behind the low hills in the west, on the evening of the second day after the unhappy occurrence, as she left the miller's hospitable dwelling and crossed the meadows on her way homewards. Wishing to be alone, she declined the offer made by one of the young girls to accompany her. The path was one along which she had often walked leaning on Philip's arm, and the thought of this raised a strange conflict of emotions in her mind. Cruel as had been his conduct towards her, she felt that to do as her friends advised and reason prompted—break off the acquaintance—would be an effort almost too painful for her to bear.

Occupied with these reflections, she had sat some time in the deepening twilight of her little room, when a low knock came at the outer door; it opened at her reply, and Philip entered—but how different from the by-the-looking Philip of former days!

Her first impulse was to advance and meet him, but on second thoughts she sat still, while her lover approached with hesitating steps, as though conscious of deserving no better reception. For some moments neither spoke; at last, unable to bear the young man's mingled look of regret and self-reproach, Mary said in low tone—'Oh, Philip!'

'Mary,' he replied, 'I must have been mad to insult you with my presence at such a time; how you must hate me!'

'Hate you? no, Philip! I loved you too well for that. If it broke my heart I could not hate you; I would pity and pray for you.'

'Generous girl!' he exclaimed, attempting to take her hand which she drew back—'you will then forgive me?'

'Can you forgive yourself, Philip? Can we ever be the same to one another as we have been?'

'Why not? You surely wont cast me off for a frolic.—We have been drinking your health, and I, unfortunately, took a little too much. But there is no great harm done just for once: it was all in honor of you.'

'For once, Philip?' she rejoined, in a tone and with a look that let him understand she was not deceived, 'Were it only once? I disbelieved the reports of your being fond of drink, but the worst is now confirmed. A man does not become a drunkard all at once. I have had time to reflect, and however painful it may be to say it, we must cease to think of each other. No! I cannot marry a man who values his reason so lightly as to drown and debase it in strong drink.'

Philip hung down his head while Mary was speaking, and felt all the shame of his position. 'But you wont cast me off so,' he replied, again looking up. 'Try me: I'll