

but docile favorite of Constance, was daily brought to the door to carry forth its young mistress.

Thus passed the time at Ardmore, and Charles, happy in the society of Constance, for a time forgot the dreams of ambition which he had formerly cherished—the proud thought of yet being able, by his own exertions, to attain independence,—to become more worthy of her love. Often as he sat at her side, listening to the tones of her voice, and looking into those dark eyes which returned his gaze with such confiding love, did he resolve to make known his affection to Captain Fitzgerald, and to solicit his consent that Constance might at once become his own. But again, in the moments when absent from her, he determined for a period to leave Ardmore again, and to see her no more till his object had been fulfilled, lest her presence should make him forget his stern resolution.

Fitzgerald understood the motives of Charles, and although it was his most ardent hope, the darling desire which he had long cherished, to see the two young beings who were all that was dear to him in the world united, he still thought, as they were both so young, that it would be better to wait a few years. He also thought that Charles could not better employ the intervening time than as he had lately been engaged. Instead of his absence from Ardmore rendering him forgetful of his early friends, and giving him a distaste for the simple, rural life, which Constance loved so well, Fitzgerald saw with delight that Charles had returned with increased affection for his early friends, and additional zest for those employments in which he used formerly to engage.

Fitzgerald did not, could not doubt that a mutual affection existed between Charles and Constance, and if he had, an incident, trifling in itself, but important in the eyes of Fitzgerald as confirming his hopes, must have removed any doubt which he entertained upon this subject.

One lovely summer morning Fitzgerald was seated after breakfast, reading the newspaper, which had just arrived. His head immersed in the voluminous pages, and his eyes intent upon their contents, he neither heard nor saw what was passing around him. At a little distance, seated by the window upon a low ottoman, was Constance with a volume open in her hand, and looking into the garden, which at that moment contained to her more poetry than poet ever sang, for there was Charles O'Donnell wandering from flower to flower, with as much fastidiousness and caprice as an idle butterfly, and with care selecting the low-liest. Well did Constance know for whom this choice was made; but as Charles, satis-

fied with the beautiful harvest he had gathered, turned his steps towards the house, Constance suddenly became immersed in the contents of the neglected volume, and appeared unaware of his approach till he addressed her.

"Constance, I have brought you some lovely flowers," he said, as he placed the bouquet in her hand. "See, I have carefully chosen your favourites."

"Thank you, Charles," replied Constance, with a grateful smile, as she inhaled the delicious odour which the blossoms, still gemmed with dew, spread around. "But what a beautiful moss-rose that is," she continued, as she observed one in his hand surrounded by half opened buds. "What a pity that such a lovely thing should fade in a few short hours!"

"Yes! 'tis a pity," replied Charles, "but it shall at least pine away beside something more beautiful than itself," and, as he spoke he placed it among the dark curls, which, in their careless luxuriance shaded her face.

But, no! the flower was not rightly placed, and it must be withdrawn. Again it was tried, but still the fastidious Charles was not satisfied. A third time the luckless moss-rose, with its lovely tint and its verdant leaves, was fastened in her hair, and she raised her hand to see whether he was now satisfied. This time it was most becomingly placed.

"You will wear this to-day for my sake, Constance, will you not?"

"I will," replied Constance, as she smilingly looked up in his face.

At this moment Fitzgerald's head emerged from the folds of the newspaper, and he surveyed the young couple with deep interest as they sat together unconscious of a looker-on. As Fitzgerald noted the affectionate look with which Charles regarded Constance, and the timid, down-cast eye, which told that the glance fell not coldly upon her heart, he mentally exclaimed:

"If true affection is to be found in this world, it surely exists in the hearts of those two young beings. May they render each other happy through life. I always thought that it was impossible that they could remain indifferent towards each other."

As Fitzgerald soliloquized thus, Charles and Constance, attracted by the rustling of the paper, looked up and beheld the eyes of Fitzgerald thus intently fixed upon them, and Constance, with a deep blush, averted quickly her glowing face, while Charles betrayed the same confusion.

Whether it was the sudden motion of the head of Constance, or some secret sympathy, the moss-rose vibrated for a moment and then fell at her