

"It's nice to have a friend people can talk about that way," said Fanny, her eyes sparkling: "and I'd like to have people think so of me."

"I don't think any one doubts your honesty more than they do that of Maggie," said Ella, with a gentle pull of the long fair hair which fell over Fanny's shoulders.

"But that composition is truly astonishing," said Mr. Leroy, returning to the subject. "It would do credit to one many years older than Maggie. Sprightly, original, and extremely witty, and with a great deal of poetry and good sense in it too. A very remarkable production for such a child, I say."

"What is the subject of it?" asked Mrs. Leroy, as Ella—her curiosity stimulated by her father's praise—took up the paper he had just laid down.

"Making the best of it," said Mr. Leroy, turning a laughing eye on Fanny. "Perhaps Bessie had a purpose in giving it to our Fan to read."

"That's what Maggie always does herself," said Fanny. "She always makes the best of every thing."

"She has certainly made a good thing of her composition on the subject," said Mr. Leroy. "A remarkable production, indeed; a very remarkably clever thing."

Mrs. Leroy and Ella fully agreed in this opinion, when they in their turn had read Maggie's composition; and it received praise enough to have satisfied even her little sister Bessie, who took such pride and glory in her clever Maggie.

The boys were more than usually occupied during this evening; for, having taken the whole afternoon for some out-door amusement, they were obliged to devote the entire evening to study. So it happened that they were not present during this conversation, or the reading of Maggie Bradford's composition by their father.

Felix was in the worst of humors—in "a dreadful stew," as Charlie expressed it—over his composition. He found it almost impossible to make a beginning; and, that done,—not at all to his own satisfaction,—he could not make it "go." He scolded at Harold for suggesting such a "subject," and at those of his school-fellows who had voted for it: called it "stuff and nonsense," "babyish humbug," "girls' ideas," and such like.

"If I only had the bothering thing composed, I could fast enough turn it into French better than Harold's, I know," he said grumblingly to Charlie.

"Of course you could," said aggravating Charlie. "I'm glad you're stuck over the compo, you've been cock of the walk, and crowded it over Hal long enough. It's his turn now."

"His turn!" sneered Felix. "Just as if Harold would take the prize! His French!"

"Yes, his French," repeated Charlie, provokingly, turning himself upside down, and putting his head where his heels should have been. "His French is not to be sneezed at, I'll tell you, when he puts his mind to it; and as for the compo, it's first rate. He let me see it."

And here Charlie, walking about on his hands, brought his feet into rather dangerous proximity to Felix's head, not quite involuntarily perhaps.

"Stop that!" cried Felix, referring to the intrusive heels; then once more returning to the subject of the composition, "Where did Hal get his ideas? Such rubbish! 'Looking on the bright side!'"

"Out of his own head, I suppose," said the voice from the floor. "Hal's ideas are not apt to come from any one else's cranium. He don't borrow: don't pla—plag—what do you call it when you steal some one else's ideas?"

Felix did not answer. Charlie's careless words had struck a thought in his brain to which he did not care to give utterance,—scarcely dared to give it shape and form even to himself. But it was there.

If he could find an idea to start with, his own, or—some one else's—what did it matter? He and Harold—all the boys—were allowed to "read up" when the theme for composition was historical, biographical, or any other subject where facts and incidents came in. Why not now?

It was an understood thing, it is true, that when the composition was to be in the form of an essay, the young writers were expected to draw entirely upon their own imaginations, without help from books or other aids; but it had never been forbidden. He only wanted "an idea;" but where to find one on such a subject? His own brains, cudgel them as he might, would not furnish him with one that was satisfactory.

"Look here, Fe," said Charlie, bringing himself to an upright position, "get Robbie to write your compo for you. He has more head for making up than any one of the lot of us."

Still no answer. Felix was absorbed, either in his composition or with his own thoughts, and Charlie, who was really good-natured,

with all his mischief and love of teasing, would not disturb him farther.

Once more Felix put his mind to the task before him; once more he made a beginning; but it seemed to him a lame one, and perhaps it was. As I have said, such themes were not Felix's forte; and his present discontented, restless mood was not propitious to composition.

And Harold was ahead of him! Harold who generally finished his compositions just at the last moment, so that they always bore the marks of haste, had composed his, and had even partly translated it. He would wager Harold had borrowed some ideas from Fanny, being so ready to take up with her ridiculous suggestion. Ideas from a girl!

Felix always measured another's sense of honor by what he believed to be that others advantage, his own truth and honesty being on a scale that would keep him just fair in the eyes of the world. To those who did not know all the little turnings and windings of his school and home life, these might stand well enough. His parents and master, though knowing him to have an undue love of gain, believed him to be above all suspicion of unfair dealing in any way; but brothers and school-mates knew him as "a screw," "a Shylock," "ready to drive a hard bargain," &c. But, gauged by his own conscience, the light of which was seldom brought to bear upon his thoughts and deeds; or—more powerful still, the All-seeing eye of God,—how far could they have borne the scrutiny; what would the record have been?

He made but little headway with his task that evening; and went to rest thoroughly out of humor, ready for almost any thing that would enable him to compass his end, and filled with bitter jealousy of Harold. But he had made up his mind what he would do. "No harm in it," he should only "borrow an idea or two, and dress it up in his own words."

(To be Continued.)

A TRUE WIFE.

Upon the terrace of the principal hotel at Whitecliff, two ladies sat in conversation, unheeding, because unaware of, a listener behind the closed blinds of a window near them. Not an intentional listener, for he was deeply absorbed in the contents of a newly arrived letter, when the sound of his name attracted his attention. One of the pretty matrons was speaking:

"I can't imagine how such a sparkling brilliant woman as Mrs. Lancaster ever came to marry that solemn piece of granite, Edward Lancaster."

"Solemn piece of granite! One of the most profound scholars, Edith! A thorough gentleman, too, and very wealthy."

"Wealthy!" repeated the first speaker. "I suppose that accounts for it. She married him for his money, of course."

"And spends it most loyally, I can't imagine Edith Lancaster without the surroundings of money. Her dresses, her jewels, her carriages seem a very part of herself."

"But she would be beautiful in a print dress and a straw hat."

"Here she comes now in her new yachting dress. Is she not lovely?"

The dark eye behind the closed blinds followed the same direction as those of the two ladies. Coming toward the hotel was a merry party, who had just then been on the water for several hours, and prominent in a group of pretty women was a tall, slender brunette, in a jaunty dress of blue cashmere with gilt buttons and broad hat, from underneath which could be seen a face of exquisite beauty. The perfect oval of shape, the clear olive complexion and crimson cheeks, the regular features and large, dark eyes, were all in oriental style; while the masses of purple black hair needed no artificial additions to wreath the small shapely head with navy braids.

She was chatting merrily and laughing as she talked, as if youth and happiness were personified in her beautiful face.

The man who watched her from the closed blinds was tall, broad-shouldered and strong-featured. His hair, thick and curly, was iron gray, and piled high above a massive forehead; his eyes were deep set, but very large and full of earnest expression. Not a handsome man, but one whose air of distinction was undoubted—a man who would be noticed in any assemblage of men.

As he watched the radiant figure in the sunlight coming toward him the shadow upon his brow grew deeper every moment, till with a groan, he rose and went to his own room, closing the door behind him.

There was little resemblance to granite in his face, as he paced up and down this room. It worked convulsively, and the emotions that in a woman would have been vented in passionate tears, found expression only in an occasional sigh that was a groan.

He was living over the last three years of his life as he walked up and down. Until that time he had been a scholar only. With large wealth, inherited from his father, he had

devoted himself to the acquisition of knowledge, living in his library, except when he travelled, always in pursuit of some new light upon a favorite science or study. His money matters were arranged by his lawyer, and his household affairs by a housekeeper, while his books were his world.

From this scholarly seclusion, at the age of forty-five, he was awakened by a call of friendship, being summoned by an old schoolmate who brought him to become guardian of a very modest fortune he was about to leave his only child. Obeying this summons, Edward Lancaster found his friend already dead, and the orphan turning to him for consolation. He took her home, gave her to Mrs. Keene, his housekeeper, as he would have done with a baby, for care and comfort, and retired again to study.

Between his eyes and the pages of his book came ever the face of the orphan girl. He found himself sitting idly before his papers, listening for the sound of a musical voice in the passage or garden. He neglected his studies, to count the hours between meals, when he met his ward at the table. Never before had a woman's face or voice awakened even a passing emotion in his heart, and interest once aroused, love crept in and took root, deep, strong, life-long. There was no possibility of driving away this love, once it was admitted. Edward Lancaster knew that Edith must be won if he was ever to know happiness in life again. If he lost her he would live, bury himself in his books once more, but never again could the same peace he had known, be found.

When he told the child—she was about seventeen—he loved her, she nestled in his arms, lifted her sweet face to his and promised to be his wife. He never doubted her love, strange as it seemed, and they were married within six months of Edith's arrival at her new home.

Once she was his own, Edward Lancaster made his wife a perfect favorite of fortune. He left his dearly beloved library to escort her to gay watering places in summer, to balls and parties in winter. He never counted the cost of any indulgence she craved. Her dress was of the costliest description; her jewels were the envy of her circle of friends; and she had but to name a wish to have it granted. She was of the sunniest temperament, child-like in her gratitude, and flitting from pleasure to pleasure as a bird flies from fruits to flowers.

Life had been very sweet to Edward Lancaster in the three years following his marriage, though many wondered, seeing the grave, elderly man, how he came to marry his child wife.

But pacing his room in the Whitecliff Hotel, Edward Lancaster questioned his happiness as he had never questioned it before. The letter he held fast in his clenched hand, the conversation behind the porch combined to probe his heart to its core, and the question hidden there rose to the surface.

Did Edith love him?

She had been always gay, tender, affectionate, deferring to his wishes more like a child with an indulgent father than a wife; for, as yet, but little wifely duty had been exacted of her. Of household cares she had none. Her life had been passed in perpetual pleasure-seeking, with no call for sacrifice.

But the letter, the faded letter, told the tender husband that the wealth he held so carelessly for years was gone in one great commercial crash; one hour a man of riches, the next a pauper. It was all gone, his lawyer wrote, and the sale of Elmsgrove, his home, would scarcely cover the liabilities incurred in the past three years.

"Edith! Edith!" That was the cry of the man's heart. His darling who had been shielded from every rude blast, who had known only the brightest side of life under his care, who had married him for money perhaps!

Had she married him for money? The thorn, once planted, stung him sore. He was not a vain man, but he had thought his love, so devoted, so true, had won a return. Money had been to him, all his life, so small a consideration, never feeling its want, that he had never taken it into consideration, except to be glad it was his to give Edith every indulgence. And now the hateful thought rose, and pressed him sorely, that he could give it her no longer.

A rattling at the door handle, a voice calling his name, roused him from his moody misery, and he drew back the bolt to admit Edith.

"Just in time to dress for dinner!" she cried coming in. "I stayed down until the last minute. Shall I ring for Mary, Edward, or—" she looked in her husband's face. "Edward, what is the matter?"

An impulse, a cruel one, prompted him to test her then and there, and he put the letter in her hand. In a moment, before she had smoothed the crumpled sheet, he repented, and drew near to catch her if she fainted and to console her if she wept. She read it all. The light of merriment in her face softened to a sweet, earnest gravity, and some of the rich color faded from her cheeks. Her voice was very tender as she said, "I'm so sorry for you,

Edward. You will miss your library, your books. Perhaps we can save some of them for you."

"But you, Edith!" he said amazed. "I? Mr. Morrell tells you, especially, that my property is safe. A hundred a year!" she said with a silvery laugh. "How little it is, compared to what you had, but I have seen a time when a hundred a year seemed positive wealth."

"But Edith, child! you do not understand. I have lost everything. I can no longer give you diamonds, lace, velvets, whenever the whim takes us. I—I can give you nothing."

His face was ashy white, and his eyes rested upon his wife with a piteous, imploring look as if entreating her pardon for some wrong. She put her arms about him, drew him down beside her on the sofa. Then she rested her head upon his broad shoulders, and put her hand in his before she spoke.

"Edward, my husband," she said gently. "do not grieve for me. I never owned jewels till you gave them to me. I was brought up in a school of comparative poverty. The income my father left me was gathered together at a cost of privation and hardship I can never describe to you. When my father died you came. I was never in a house so beautiful as Elmsgrove. I never had any one to speak to me so lovingly as you spoke. My father had given me an education, and my teachers were fond of me, but he seldom spoke to me, I was a desolate child."

"Edith! Edith!" her husband said tenderly.

"Then you took me home. You spoke so gently; you cared to have me near you. You loved me. You so noble, so good, so rich, stooped down to love poor little me. Edward, nobody ever loved me in all my life but you. You gave me every wish of my heart; but all the pleasures, all the indulgence, were nothing beside your love."

Edward Lancaster was too much moved to speak. Never before had Edith torn the veil from her heart as she was doing now, and the certainty he was rapidly gaining that she had given love for love was a happiness too overpowering to find vent in words.

"And yet," Edith said softly, "there was always one wish ungratified. Do not think I undervalue all the sacrifices you have made for me; I appreciate the care for me that has made you leave your home, your books, to take me about in the gay world. I saw that it made you happy to have me dress handsomely, to have me invited into society and enjoy its pleasures, but in all these three years I have scarcely seen you; I have craved a home where we could be all to each other; where no claim of the gay world should come between us. Not a grand home, with servants to perform each task, but a home your wife could beautify with her own hands. Now we will find one, my husband. I am longing to show how nicely I can cook; how daintily I can clean a room. While you read I will work; and in the evening we will sit together in our tiny sitting-room, and be far happier than we are in these crowded hotels. And Edward, if we are very saving, we can buy back your books. There are all my jewels, surely they will buy some."

"Edith, stop! my own happiness bewilders me. You love me like that? You will be happy in a poor home cooking and working for me?"

Edith lifted her shining dark eyes to the noble face bending over her and drew down her husband's head till her lips touched his.

"I love you—I love you!" she whispered. "Love will make all labor light if it is for you."

There was contention in the gay circle of Edith's friends when the next day she was missed from among them. Speculations were wild regarding the sudden disappearance of the brilliant star of society and many were the pitying words lavished upon her when Edward Lancaster's losses were known.

But the little wife neither knew of the pity nor asked for sympathy. Her husband accepted a professorship in a college, and furnished for her the home Edith craved.

The beauty that had made Edith a star in the most brilliant circle of society lost nothing in her husband's eyes when it was the household light after his days of college, and work. In her quiet dresses, without glittering gems, Edith was lovely as she had ever been in her costly ball or dinner toilettes; and the little hands that could rest idly in luxury, glitter with valuable rings, and flash over the piano keys were busy from dawn to sunset in the housework that women find ever waiting for them.

Edward Lancaster was never very poor, and Edith never knew again the wants and cares of her girlhood; but the wealth he had lost was not restored and never regretted. By its loss he had learned his wife's heart; deprived of that, he found the treasure of happy, domestic life, and in his new duties he found the pleasure of making the knowledge he loved useful to others.