

Ellen just then came in, and after shaking hands with Charles told him that she wanted him to go with her after tea to Amherst.

"We can ride over," she said, "on horse-back and a smart gallop will do us no harm. If we can persuade Alice to come with us all the better."

"Very well, I shall be happy to go with you. As for Alice, I have not seen her for these three or four days. One thing or another has always interposed."

"Well, you are a nice man surely to be engaged to my cousin, and not go to see her for so long a time; you should be ashamed of yourself! If I had a beau I'd teach him better."

"Poor girl! you have none, have you?"

"None at all."

"You forget Edward Bland."

"Oh, no; but he's away, you know,—I mean here."

"All very fine, Miss Ellen, but I guess he's the 'coming man' absent or present."

Edward Bland of whom we have here made mention for the first time was a twin brother of the doctor's, but in every respect his contrast, both in looks and disposition. He was, to tell the truth, not a little like Charles Rivers whose friend he had been at college, and the resemblance extended to their habits as well as their looks. He was a lawyer, also, and had been absent in Europe for some months on a tour previously to his commencing the practice of his profession. He was, however, expected home soon. People said that he was engaged to Ellen Foster, and there was doubtless some truth in the report.

After tea the horses were brought round to the door, and Charles and Ellen cantered down the avenue.

"Charles," she said, as soon as they reached the wood, "I have something very serious to say to you. I intend not to give you a scolding which I think you deserve, but to warn you that Alice has heard something of your career at college which has given her great pain. Her mother, also knows of it, and in short, it has produced a feeling against you in their minds which will require extra good behaviour on your part to eradicate and efface."

"Of what have they heard?"

"Of your drinking, &c., and, to speak generally, being a very wild young man."

"And Alice knows this?"

"She does."

"Who is her informer?"

"I cannot say, some vulgar old gossip I suppose."

"What does she propose to do about the matter, I wonder?"

"I do not know, but I know this, that Alice was very near not seeing you again—and had she taken her mother's advice your chances of making explanations would be small."

"Making explanations!" Charles' face flushed, and he spoke with asperity if not with

anger. "They shall get no explanations from me. If I have been a wild young man, that is my own affair. Let them leave the past alone. It is enough for them to look at the present and the future. Miss Alice is commencing her censorship of my conduct rather early."

"Nay, Charles, you are rash and wrong her. She has defended you before her mother, and expressed her disapprobation of her mother's wish for her to break the engagement."

"If I do her wrong, I am sorry; but why does her mother interfere?"

"She probably thinks it her duty to do so. It is not improbable that her regard for her child's happiness prompts her to speak."

"Or her wish to mix her piety up with my affairs."

"Possibly a little of both."

By this time they had reached Mrs. Alton's, and were met at the door by Alice. She readily agreed to accompany them to Amherst, and her greeting to Charles was affectionate and kind as ever. She evidently still accorded to him the highest place in her heart. Charles, on the contrary, was cold and formal with her, and seemed so chilling in his manner towards her, that she was more than once tempted to ask him the cause. It was well she did not do so, for he then was in no humor for reasoning or listening to reason,—he was experiencing the worst of all feelings,—that of being angry with himself. To an upbraiding mind, conscious of its own folly, this is the sting of the adder which gnaws at the heart without the power to remove it.

Ellen Foster observed the constraint under which the lovers were labouring, and, as usual, ridiculed them for it.

"Well, you are a pretty pair of love-birds. Is that the way you intend to treat each other through life? Come, make up your differences. I am ashamed of you, Charles. You have been entirely in the wrong, and do you expect to mend the matter by displaying your anger? I will leave you for a little and gallop on ahead. If by the time I return you have not become as good friends as ever I will disown you both." So saying the high spirited girl urged her horse to a gallop and left them.

No differences are in general so easily settled as those of lovers, and it was therefore not long until Charles and Alice came to an amiable understanding, Charles confessed his rashness and haste, and Alice promised to pay no heed to anything she heard of his past life.

They joined Ellen again in a few moments and after a short canter were in Amherst. After they had transacted their business there they turned their faces slowly homeward.

They had just come to one of those places so common in all our provincial highways where the road had been changed and a new one run a few rods from the old one. A thin screen of small spruce bushes separated the two roads. Darkness was just coming on and objects were