

told her mother that because she had been so good he would commission Ethel to paint him a picture for his rooms, but only on condition that she would not work at it more than half an hour at a time till he came again. So he propped her up and left her, laughing at a parting sallie of his, with her book on her knee, her new pencil in her hand. She waited for him to get safely downstairs, then in a loud whisper she demanded her pencil box. "That thing," indicating the screw, "is well enough for ornament, mamma, and it was so kind of him to bring it," she said, selecting a stubby and much used crayon with a broad point, "but it would be no good at all to work with. Please, leave it by my bed, though, for I wouldn't like to hurt his feelings, and he might not like it, if he thought I didn't use it."

The clever fingers were already sketching an imaginary landscape. "I am going to do a half a dozen or so," she continued, "just to see which I like the best, and then I shall finish the one I choose, properly."

At the end of the half hour, two and a half were roughly sketched in, and it was said to have to leave the third unfinished, but the laws of the Medes and Persians were mild compared with Doctor Jones' orders; so the cherished pencil had to be given up, not, however, without many sighs and doleful looks directed towards her mother, who was the unlucky enforcer of that stern person's commands.

"Never mind, Ethel," she said, laughing at her most melancholy countenance, "lie down and I will tell you a lovely story about a little boy who loved drawings and paintings just as much as you do," and soon they were deep in the life of Michael Angelo. When Mrs. Elton stopped the child's face was all aglow. "Oh mother, I wish I might learn—take lessons, you know, from somebody—and then, perhaps, some day I could paint like he did."

From that moment the thought never left her mind, and she and her mother discussed ways and means with the deepest interest, finally deciding to ask the Doctor's advice on the subject, a decision generally arrived at on any important point relating to Ethel, who promised not to fret if he refused his permission.

Her immediate danger was over; he did not call more than once or twice a week, and great was the impatience with which his next visit was waited for. "Really, Mamma, I do think he might come," protested Ethel one morning, "it's four days since he was here last. I have been downstairs every day and I am just nearly quite well again, and here I am wasting valuable time. If he doesn't come to-day, don't you think you might drive over and ask him about it?"

Mrs. Elton, always anxious to please her little girl, consented, and Ethel was satisfied. However, not long after twelve o'clock the strong, quick voice was heard in the hall and in he came.

"Why, downstairs already, girlie?" he exclaimed, "how is this?"

"Well, Doctor dear, if you had only come to see me two or three days sooner, you would have found that out before, for I have been up and down every day since Monday."

"Up and down, have you? I think that is pretty much what you are made

of, ups and downs—rather more downs than ups, though, eh?"

"Oh no," Ethel gaily answered, for she would never own herself ill, "I am very much up to-day, and if you will only say that I may have painting lessons I won't be able to get any higher."

"Painting lessons, what for?"

"Why to learn to paint, Doctor dear."

"But what do you want to learn to paint for?"

"Don't tease, please Doctor. I want to paint you such a lovely picture, and I must have some lessons, so that some day I will paint like Michael Angelo."

"Oh, is that it? Well, I don't see why not."

Ethel clasped her hands in rapture and the Doctor continued:—

"I ran up to London yesterday on business, and a painter fellow came down in the train with me, and when I asked him where he was bound for with all his paraphernalia, he said he was going to do some sketching 'round Glenallan."

"But would he give lessons?" put in Mrs. Elton.

"I can find that out," said the Doctor, "there is no one else nearer than the city."

"I suppose not; but do you know anything about him, Doctor?"

"Well no, I can't say I do. He seemed a decent enough fellow to talk to, though he does look fearfully foreign."

"Oh never mind that, please," begged Ethel. "I do want him so much. Let him come to-morrow and try if he will."

"But if he comes you must promise me to be very good and quiet, so as not to get tired and fainty again, for if you do I shall put a stop to it all."

That would be a dire punishment, so she promised, and there it was settled.

"Of course," said the Doctor in parting, "I don't know anything about the fellow, but I dare say it won't hurt to try him, as you both seem so set on it. He spoke quietly enough."

"We will be able to see in a couple of lessons," returned Mrs. Elton. "Of course I will be with Ethel all the time."

Doctor Jones nodded, said good-bye, and was off.

CHAPTER II.

Next day Mrs. Elton made Ethel lie in bed quietly till after lunch (a very wise precaution), so that she should not risk the chance of tiring herself before the artist came. However, by three o'clock she was all ready for him, seated in her low chair by the large drawing room window, with the table close beside her, on which were arranged all her artist tools.

She watched the gate for half an hour, chatting the while to her mother on the appearance of artists in general; and at the end of that time her patience was rewarded. A tall, dark individual opened it and came slowly up the path, looking around him as he did so.

"His hair isn't long," whispered Ethel, watching from behind the curtain, "but he can paint just as well, I suppose, if it isn't."

"I expect he can," answered her mother as the bell rang; "we shall soon find out."

Monsieur Noire was ushered into the room and stood just inside the door, with his hat in his hand, while Mrs. Elton went forward to meet him.

Ethel saw a tall, very dark complexioned man, with thick black hair and eyebrows meeting over the bridge of his nose, hard eyes, brilliant and black, which appeared to take in everything at a glance, a mouth hidden by a heavy black moustache, and a square chin.

And Monsieur Noire's quick gaze, while he was answering Mrs. Elton's questions, fastened itself upon Ethel, as if fascinated by her wonderful beauty. With her glowing eyes, a faint pink in her cheeks and her beautifully moulded features, the child was enough to delight anybody's eye but most of all an artist's.

After a few preliminaries the lesson began. He drew a chair to the table and began to question Ethel about what she could do, and after a while he set her to work on one of two little plaster tablets which he had brought with him, while she was painstakingly copying what he was sketching the fair head bending over the paper with the long hair falling on the hand that held the pencil.

He did not seem to be very communicative, contenting himself with merely answering any questions addressed to him.

Major Elton came into the room, and after a few words let it again, leaving the dining room door open.

Mrs. Elton asked Ethel if she felt draught.

"Permit me to close it for you, mamma," he immediately said, rising and going towards it. They neither of them saw the quick comprehensive glance at the room, the sideboard, the glass cabinet which held the boys' athletic prizes, which the Major was so proud, of the gleam in those dark eyes.

When the lesson was over he asked Mrs. Elton if he might take a sketch of the house from the south side, and on her consenting, he passed through one of the French windows opening on to the terrace and settled himself at a little distance. When they next looked over it, he was gone.

"He wasn't very long over it," said Ethel.

"No, perhaps he will come and show it to-morrow," returned her mother.

"I don't like the looks of that man," said the Major to his wife after dinner. "he isn't a gentleman."

"Well, don't disappoint the little one," pleaded Mrs. Elton, "even if he isn't."

That night, going to bed, all Ethel's talk was of her lesson, her master and her painting.

"You know, Bessie," she chattered away to the nurse, "Mamma says that I get on very well with Monsieur Noire; some day she will take me to Rome to study under the great masters." "You waited to see what effect the announcement would have upon Bessie, but all she said was, 'If you don't hold still, I can't help pulling your hair.'"

And then: "I wonder why some people are made with black hair and some with hair that is nearly white, like mine. That was the next thing, with a puzzled gleam in the looking-glass.

"Don't you think Monsieur Noire wasn't quite black, and his eyes too? Papa says he looks wicked, but I think he only is very unhappy; and do you know, Bessie, confidentially, 'sometimes I feel