

certain that none of her neighbors could have surpassed her entertainment.

Mr. Harford, who had taken Mrs. Doyno in to dinner, and who was fond of flowers, noticed the unusual display arranged by Lily's tasteful hands, and his admiration of them gave Mrs. Doyno the opportunity for which she had ardently longed of mentioning their donor.

"Our neighbor, Sir Alan Lester, sent them," she said proudly.

"Is he?" answered Godfrey, and his lips gave a little nervous quiver under his heavy brown moustache, the ends of which were just tinged with grey.

And he looked across the table at Lily with a fresh pang in his heart and great sadness in his kindly eyes. How fair she was—how fair! Would Alan Lester ever cherish her, and love her, as he would have done? He thought this at that moment, and turned his eyes away from the sweet, glad face that had never seemed so beautiful before.

On his other side was the eldest Miss Sparrowhawk, the same young lady who had filled poor Jim Lester's heart with actual terror by her learning and experiments in natural history. She now attacked the Squire of Kismet, for whom she was supposed to have a hidden regard.

"Have you seen that interesting treatise, Mr. Harford, on—"

"Oh, Miss Sparrowhawk," interrupted the Squire, with a gleam of his old light heartedness, passing over his face, "don't ask me about treatises of any sort, you know I'm a regular dunce!"

"I would be sorry to think that, Mr. Harford."

"It's a fact, though," laughed the Squire, "and I don't think you ladies should spoil your eyes and complexions by too much study. I'm an old-fashioned man, and if a woman is good and pretty, that's quite enough for me."

"And is the intellectual part of us of no account, then? The deep thoughts that wander through the universe—that would please eternity?"

"My dear Miss Sparrowhawk," said the Squire a little gravely, "I am content, as my mother was before me, to leave mysteries which are too great for me alone. No living eye can see beyond the veil, and the old foundations of our faith are to my mind the safest, and all modern theories seem to me too flimsy to supplant them."

Upon this Miss Sparrowhawk plunged into a somewhat incoherent discourse in which the words "physical evolution," "millions of organisms," fell harmlessly on the Squire's inattentive ears.

"What a bore the woman is," he is thinking; he would have liked her better with the simplest language upon her lips.

He was glad, therefore, when the ladies went away, and when he rejoined them in the drawing room he may be sure he did not go near the aspiring Miss Sparrowhawk. He went and sat down by Lily, and the girl looked shyly and sweetly in his face, little guessing that she owed her present happiness to his unselfish love.

CHAPTER XLVI.—WHAT THE COLONEL SAW.

Mrs. Doyno retired that night with the pleasant consciousness that her party had been a success, that everyone had enjoyed themselves, and that Mr. Harford still evidently admired Lily. But the Colonel took more gloomy views, for he had just paid a considerable sum of money to the irreproachable head waiter, for the terms of the house in town, who had supplied the goods (silver, cutlery, and men included), were strictly cash.

"Well, everything went off extremely well," remarked Mrs. Doyno to her spouse. "Oest a deuced lot of m. say," grumbled the Colonel.

"When one has daughters to settle, my dear, it is impossible to avoid expense, and I believe that Mr. Harford is still in love with Lily, and of course he came here to-day in opposition to Lady Elizabeth's wishes—what a nice man he is—I shall be quite satisfied if Lily marries him."

"I thought it was Sir Alan Lester you had an idea of?"

"I can't make Sir Alan out; it was very civil of him to send the flowers certainly, but then you see he did not come to-day. My belief is they both admire her, and of course they are both men of excellent position."

"Humph," muttered the Colonel, still in an aggrieved tone. The truth was he was a

poor man for the position he was forced to keep up, and to do him justice he was honest. He hated to owe a penny, and he never could help it, but he also hated to spend one. He therefore lay ruefully computing the cost of this entertainment, but even when his reflections terminated in deep and prolonged moans, Mrs. Doyno's heart was full of triumph and self-satisfaction.

And in all the world that night there was no happier heart than her young daughter's! Lily Doyno could not sleep for her great joy. She was going to see Alan Lester to-morrow, he loved her, and some day she would be his wife. Tossing on her pillow, with her fair hair unbound, and her fair face flushed, she kept telling herself again and again the sweet story.

In this gentle heart there was no selfishness. She did not think "Sir Alan is a rich man, I have done well, and other girls will envy me." She thought of one one but Alan, whom she might love and worship now without shame—of sweet days and hours when she would be alone with him, when she would share his thought, and if trouble or pain came to him she would still be near him, and comfort him and tend him until her life would end.

Those were her waking dreams, and when at last she fell into the placid sleep of youth, she dreamed of Alan still—indistinct sweet visions in which the face of her love floated before her, clothed in mysterious light, which faded, and yet left a memory when the bright May day broke, and the sun flooded the girl's room with its golden light.

Lily started up, ashamed to see how late it was, and hastily dressed herself, putting on a new, pale blue morning-gown, and ran downstairs as fresh and fair as any English girl could be.

The energetic and economical Mrs. Doyno had been up betimes to see after the remains of the feast, lest some light fingered maid might appropriate dessert or sweets, which Mrs. Doyno carefully looked away.

She looked round as her young daughter entered, and shook her head disapprovingly at the new gown.

"You extravagant child! What have you put on that dress this morning for? I wanted you to help me to put by the things."

"Not this morning, mother," answered Lily, with a pretty blush, "I am going out for a walk this morning, it is so fine."

"Oh," said Mrs. Doyno, contemplatively, and during breakfast she made no further allusion to Lily's dress, except to say the gown was a nice fit, and that the colour suited her.

Presently the Colonel made his appearance with a headache. He had in fact taken too much of the cheap champagne to which he had treated his friends the evening before, and was now reaping the bitter consequences.

"Will you go out for a walk with me this morning, Lily?" he said, hoping the air would relieve his throbbing temples.

"I can't go this morning, father," answered Lily, and again she blushed, this time so deeply that her mother was convinced that her daughter was going out to meet Mr. Harford by appointment!

"I would not be in the least bit surprised if they settled all last night," thought the eldest mother; "however, I shall be waiting to her father, or he's sure to make some blunder or other of it if I do. I dare say we shall hear something before the day is over."

Little Mrs. Doyno guessed what she was to hear! Lily shyly went out of the room, and presently quietly left the house by the back door lest her father, who was staring disconsolately out of the front window, thinking of his headache and his expense, might see her, and again offer to go out for a walk with her.

It was close on the "appointed hour" at which Lily had promised to meet Alan Lester, when she reached the side of the water in the park, which lay glittering in the morning sunshine like a lake of gold.

Two of the deer—fawn-coloured, graceful creatures—were drinking when Lily approached, and turned and fled with swift, light feet as their gentle, liquid eyes fell on the young stranger. Lily sat down on a green bank by the side of the lake, watching the wild ducks near a little wooded islet, now calling, now diving, in the sunlit water.

It was a beautiful spot this, so still that the blackbird's clear notes, and a rustle now and then, amid the bracken and ferny ex-

dergrowth beneath the green trees were the only sounds that broke on the silent air. But presently Lily's expectant ears heard another sound—a quick, firm, light step; and she rose blushing, young and fair, and held out her hand to Alan Lester.

"I'm so sorry, Lily. Have you waited long?"

"Only a few minutes; and it's so lovely, it didn't seem long, Alan."

"I am glad of that. Yes, it's a beautiful morning; may I sit down beside you, dear? I declare, we look as if we were in Arcadia!" And Alan gave a light laugh.

Lily laughed too—a girlish, happy laugh—and then a tender look stole over her face as Alan took her hand.

"And how did the grand party come off, Lily?"

"Oh, very well; mother was very pleased—and, Alan, the flowers were so beautiful. I arranged them all myself, and everyone admired them—and look! I kept a rose." And Lily touched a yellow tear in the bosom of her blue gown.

"Did you mean it for me?" smiled Alan, holding out his hand for the rose.

"Would you take it; you who have so many?"

"Not many that have been worn by Miss Lily Doyno! Thank you, Lily, and in return I have got something for you, but I won't tell you yet what it is."

"Yes, tell me Alan. Don't tease me."

"Must I not, little one? You look very pretty, do you know, Lily, this morning," said Alan, turning round and looking contemplatively in the fair young face by his side.

"Yes, sweetly pretty. Are you very happy, dear?"

"Yes, so—so happy, Alan!" And Lily's head fell nestling on his breast, and he put his arm round her and drew her closer to him.

"Do you know what I've been thinking?" he asked, bending his head down to hers.

"No, Alan."

"That it would not be quite straight and right of me not to tell your father and mother, Lily, that we have settled matters between us. I know what you are going to say—that it's sweeter for only us two to know—so it is dear; but you see there are certain codes that an honourable man cannot break, and it would not do for you and I to meet each other as we are doing now unless your mother and father knew. You see you are very young, Lily?"

"Yes; but we are so happy, are we not, as we are now?"

"But we couldn't stay as we are now, you silly child! Some prying eyes would be seeing me sitting with my arm around your waist, and wouldn't there be a terrible scandal! Colonel Doyno would call me out; Frank would arrive with his revolver; Mrs. Grundy would shake her head, and I don't know what would happen!" and once more Alan laughed.

"Well, wait a little while at least?"

"How long; a fortnight?"

"A fortnight certainly is a very short time—still—"

"And I must only see you twice in the fortnight, eh?"

"Oh! Alan! Only twice; but I'm sure your joking. Indeed, who knows, some one may be looking at us now!" And Alan glanced laughing around.

Alan, there was some one actually looking at them! Colonel Doyno, finding that he could not get his young daughter to go for a walk with him, and tempted by the beauty of the morning, had strolled out for a solitary ramble, and had gone into Roden park intending to have a cigar by the lake, and to amuse himself by watching the water-fowl.

But just as he was about to emerge from the shadow of the trees, a slight mist his eyes which in his own phraseology "nearly knocked him over." Yes there, just before him, with their backs to him, sitting on the bank by the lake, was a young woman in a blue gown, and a young man in a light grey suit with his arm around her, and the young woman's head was lying on the young man's breast.

The Colonel rubbed his eyes; and shook himself—could his senses be leaving him? Was it an optical delusion? Or was it really, really his daughter Lily and Alan Lester!

He stood there gasping, and his face got very red. To do him justice he was no coward, and some very war-like and ferocious thoughts rushed into his mind. He would knock Sir Alan down—he ought to

be ashamed of himself to lead a young girl into such a flagrant breach of decorum.

As he was meditating what to do, still staring at the pair before him, another idea flashed into his mind; the idea that had occurred to him in Burnly woods, that Lily and Sir Alan were lovers, and that probably they were engaged, or at all events likely to become so.

"I want to speak to you for a minute, Lydia," he said, and Mrs. Doyno looking round saw at once by her husband's expression that he had something important to communicate, and she, therefore, descended from her chair and followed him into the breakfast room.

"What is it you want, my dear?" she asked.

"I've something to tell you," said the Colonel, who was quite pale with excitement; "I've got quite a shock, Lydia. Who do you think I came upon in Roden Park?"

"How can I tell, Richard?"

"Lily and Sir Alan Lester—sitting, if you will believe me, with his arm around her waist, and her head upon his breast! There! Did you ever hear of such a thing? A young girl like Lily!"

"With Sir Alan Lester?" repeated Mrs. Doyno at once, catching some of her husband's excitement. "Then I see it all now; I understand now about the flowers and everything, and how Lily has seemed so bright and happy these two last days. She is engaged to him, Richard, I bet you a hundred pounds!"

"I hope so," said the Colonel, "for I won't stand anything else, I can tell you. Sir Alan or no Sir Alan, I don't care who it is, but I won't have my daughter sitting with a man's arm round her waist, unless she is engaged to him. You must see about it at once, Lydia."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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