

'All love is sweet, given & returned.  
'Common as light is love,  
'And its familiar voice wearies not ever.'

All love is sweet. Yes, and when love exists without jealousy then is love beautiful and perfected. But how seldom is the heaven-born passion free from its dark attendant, jealousy! So I maintain that the period of courtship is a very doubtfully happy time for a great many people. I say nothing of after marriage, except that I think the happy and the unhappy marriages are about equally divided. And I think those who have married happily have reached the most exalted state of bliss to be had on earth.

Does anyone accuse Mr. Standfield of dilatoriness or lukewarmness in not seeking Judith at once, instead of thus putting off from day to day the final test? He was not so; on the contrary it was his great love for her which made him fearful of speaking too soon. And for his faint-heartedness, may not something be said in excuse? He was not quite a young man, and had not a young man's impetuosity and self-confidence—call it vanity if you like. On the other hand this girl was very young, scarcely yet eighteen; and in his great tenderness and solicitude for her welfare, he would not bind her to a promise which, when she came to know her own heart better, she might bitterly regret. And if it were so, if she found that this preference for him was but a girl's first fancy, well, then he would be thankful he had not brought this trouble upon her through his own selfishness; and he would go his way praying for her happiness, blessing her for the sweet affection she had given him; and for her sake thinking better of all women, even, for her sake condoning the fault of the woman who had embittered his young manhood, shaking his faith in her sex; yes, even of Dorothy he would think without bitterness.

"Mr. Standfield," said Judy, as they were on their way out of the woods, "You asked me just now if anything had troubled me; that was only one little trouble of my own, but there is something else that has troubled me for a long time; it may be that I magnify it and think too much of it, and—perhaps I ought not to speak to a stranger about it, but you will understand."

"But do you consider me a stranger, Judith?" he said with an odd kind of smile, looking down at her. She raised her eyes to his, and—perhaps it was something in his face—her own was instantly covered with crimson blushes. They walked on in silence for about half a minute, both with wildly beating hearts. It was a great temptation for the strong man, but he put a curb upon himself and kept silence.

"Ah! but you know what I meant," she said, presently; "that, it might be, you would blame me for talking about Augusta's private affairs to one who is not of the family."

"If it will be any relief to you to speak of what you say has been troubling you, I think you may trust me. And—well, if I think there is anything to censure in your confidence, why, I will tell you so; and you will patiently submit to a lecture from an elderly friend, will you not?"

"Elderly!" exclaimed the girl, with a merry laugh—"Why, you are not a bit elderly; but this is what I was going to ask you. Do you not think it very, very sad that two people should be married without in the least caring for one another? Ah! I cannot tell you how I have longed to—appeal to Augusta and get her to put an end to this engagement; but, of course, it would be utterly useless, so useless indeed, that it would be quite ridiculous to attempt it; and

yet I am troubled for her future. Is it not, do you think, very wrong to do as she is doing?"

"Undoubtedly," he answered gravely; "but of course you can do nothing, nor can anyone else; Miss Laurie and Mr. Thorpe are old enough to know what they are about. And for your comfort, my little friend, let me tell you that neither he nor she is capable of any deep feeling—of a gentle kind I mean—so that if this marriage turn out badly there will be no such thing as a broken heart on either side; so I really would not trouble myself so much about it if I were you; after all, they may get along very comfortably together, even without the romantic ingredient—love. And now, Miss Judith, it is my turn; I am going to ask your opinion about another kind of marriage. Supposing a man who had already passed his first youth were to marry a girl very much younger than himself, who thought she really loved him when she married him, but afterwards when it was too late, discovered that what she had mistaken for love was in reality only a girl's brief fancy; what then?"

"Ah, then it would be very sad for her!" answered the girl, in her quaint, out-spoken way.

"So I think," he said, coolly. "And what do you think she would do then?"

"Why, then, if she, this young wife, were good and noble she would try and teach herself to truly love her husband; surely she would owe him reparation for having mistaken her own feelings."

"And he—don't you think some blame would attach to him for having taken advantage of her youth and inexperience? even if he loved her very much?"

"The young wife *might* think so," answered Judith, gravely; "but that would be only a momentary reflection; if the husband were tender and patient she would be very stubborn indeed if she did not learn to be quite happy with him again."

Her words did not lighten his heart nor disperse any of his doubts; so still he said to himself, "Wait; for her sake, wait a little longer."

## CHAPTER VII.

### SNOW-BALLS.

IT was the evening of Mr. Littleworth's return to Eastville. In the orchard were gathered several young people, lazily lounging on the grass or the garden chairs. Three young ladies from the rectory—merry maidens, who liked nothing better than a romp in the big Bonny Dale orchard, two youths from the village, Judy's devoted slaves; Mr. Littleworth, Augusta and Judith completed the group. Miss Laurie had volunteered to read aloud, and as all present knew very well that she prided herself on her elocution, no one had the temerity to protest; though the Graham girls fidgeted, and scarcely concealed their weariness, as the reader's hard, unmusical voice gave forth Sir Walter's lines in a way that would have made that eminent poet shiver:

"Thus, motionless, and moanless, drew  
His parting breath stout Rhoderick Dhu!  
Old Allan Bane looked on aghast,  
While grim and still his spirit pass'd;  
But when he saw that life was fled,  
He pour'd his wailing o'er the dead."

It is probable that Miss Laurie would have favored her listeners with the lament that followed, but to their intense relief Mr. Laurie's voice was at that moment heard from the