

Cora is the second of a family of three. Rob, who attends college, older by three years. "Baby Lill," complete the family. It has been a good thing for Cora that she was a middle "child." She has not been spoiled by being the eldest or the youngest. Rob has always domineered, or tried to, on the strength of his superior age, and his being a boy. While Lillie has tyrannised over her to her heart's content. No matter how angry she feels, there is never a sharp word for "Lillie," her baby, as she calls her. Her father, a professor in the college, her mother the daughter of another, she has inherited a taste for learning more than ordinary. But her love of fun saves her from the reputation of a bookworm. Many the "scrape" had she and Ray shared, till to speak of one suggests the other. Many a time has poor Dr. Raynor, the principal of the High School, when driven to his wit's end by their pranks, invited them to call on him after hours and lectured them on propriety, till at last the girls have dubbed him "Old Mortality" "Ichabod Crane," and various other titles more saucy than complimentary.

Not that he is old either, for he is probably not more than thirty-five or six, but he is tall, dark-complexioned, wears colored spectacles, and never jokes.

"He never looked so solemn!" thinks Ray, as she wonders what he is going to say, as with a curt "Good-day," she turns abruptly up street towards home, but finds he means to go that way too, though he has just come down.

For half a block they keep step silently, till at last from the sheer necessity of saying something, she says:—"Oh, Doctor, is it true that you are going away?"

"Yes, Miss Ray! it is quite true."

Another pause. Then, "When will you go?"

"Immediately. I suppose you will be glad to hear that Mr. Sheppard is to fill the vacancy!"

"Where are you going?" she asks the question almost without thinking.

"To Germany again," is the reply.

Again a silence, and she wonders why he takes the trouble to walk with her, if he has nothing to say. They have never been friendly. It is a surprise to her now that she does not say anything to provoke him. Well, she will soon be home and then she will be rid of this embarrassing silence. They can see the house now, and the sight of it seems to rouse him.

"Miss Ray, will you not say you are sorry?"

Ray looks up for a moment, and then laughs as she says:—"Why, Dr. Raynor! I should think you would be only too glad to be rid of me, to care whether I was sorry or not. You know that you and I have agreed to disagree on nearly every subject."

"Please do not let us disagree now. I have felt our disagreements very keenly always, but to-night I feel as though I could not bear any more. This is probably the last time I shall ever look upon your face, possibly it is the last time we shall ever meet, and I want to go away feeling that no one hates me."

During this speech Ray has stolen a glance or two at his usually pale face, and is surprised to find it flushed, and a mist about his eyes and a quiver in his voice, very foreign to it.

They have passed the house, and even she has forgotten to go in, so surprised is she by his manner.

At last she says, "I really didn't suppose we could manage a conversation without quarrelling, but if you put it in that light I can hardly quarrel with you, 'Two it takes to make a quarrel' you know. But I do not understand what you mean by never seeing me again. Of course you will come back with a string of letters more to your name representing some unpronounceable German degree. And you will find us all prosing along without a solitary degree."

"I think not. Only one thing would induce me to come back, and that I fear will never be."

"Oh, if that is the case, we need not look for your speedy return to Sleepy Hollow, the town of superb sunset, but to-night's sunset is past, and see where we are, and it is nearly dark, so I must hurry home. Good-bye!"

"May I not accompany you?"

"No, thank you, for fear I should not get home for another hour. I expected to be home an hour ago but you led me astray."

"I should be very sorry to do that!" The gravity of his manner checks the flippant reply that rises to her lips, and again she wonders what new

spirit has taken possession of him, so instead of replying, she silently holds out her hand.

He takes it in both of his, and looking down at her, says: "Miss Ray, I have one favor to ask. Promise me that if ever you need a friend, that you will let me know. Believe me I would come from the ends of the earth to serve you. Please let me hear you say it. I shall be sure then that you will remember."

She is too surprised to answer in words, but almost mechanically bows her head.

He eagerly watches her face, but seeing she does not answer, he suddenly stoops and leaves a kiss on the plump little hand which he still holds, drops it before she has time to remonstrate, and turns abruptly up the street, leaving her rooted to the spot, her astonishment apparently too great for her to move. When he has disappeared around the next corner she begins to realize what has taken place, and starts toward home, a regular tempest raging within her breast.

"I hate him! I hate him!" she says, grinding her teeth. "What an idiot I made of myself. And to think that he actually kissed my hand. I who have vowed over and over again that no man should ever kiss me but my husband (supposing I ever get one)."

Reaching home she rushes up to her room and commences a vigorous bathing of the offended hand till it glows as if with shame. After this she feels

somewhat relieved, and goes down to tea. Here she finds that her mother is laid up with a sick headache, her father not yet in from his round of visits to patients, and the juvenile members of the family in rebellion against cook's authority.

It taxes all her abilities to control household affairs for the next two or three days, and thinks no more about her encounter till one evening about a week later her father says at tea:

"Ray, dear! had you not better return to school to-morrow? I think mother can safely be left now, and you will lose the first days under Mr. Sheppard."

"Why did Dr. Raynor decide to leave so suddenly?" inquired Mrs. Rathbun.

"Did I not tell you? Oh, I believe in the pressure of other matters I forgot to mention it. Well, last week, he consulted Dr. R——, the famous oculist about his eyes, who said to him, 'Do not read a word that you can possibly avoid. Seek as great a change as you can. If possible, see Dr. K——, of Berlin. He may be able to help you. I cannot. Do not be altogether discouraged, but I must tell you the truth and that is, that there is about one chance in ten, that your sight may be preserved.'"

"Oh dear, dear! What a blow to a man of his ambitious temperament!" sighed Mrs. Rathbun.

"Please excuse me mother, I don't feel quite well. I think I'll lie down." This from Ray.



CHRISTMAS MORNING.