

One Night's Mystery.

By May Agnes Fleming.

CHAPTER I.—CONTINUED.

There is a moment's pause, and teacher and pupil confront each other. That an explosion will follow, Miss Sydney Owenson fully expects, but what was she to do? Helen Home was a day-scholar, who surreptitiously smuggled story-books inside the sacred walls of the pensionnat for the private delectation of the boarders. Helen had been threatened with expulsion the next time she was caught in the act of "red-handed," so to say, and it was much more on Helen's account than on her own that Sydney Owenson was palpitating now.

"I coaxed so hard for that 'Pickwick,' Sydney thinks. 'I hope to goodness some of the girls will pick it up and hide it outside. I don't mind mamma's frowns—I'm used to it—but I'd never forgive myself if Nell came to grief through me.'

She looks up now in mademoiselle's indignant face, clasps two little white hands imploringly, and begins, with that voice and smile mademoiselle herself declares to be the most charming on earth, to wheedle her out of her just wrath.

"Oh, Mamma's Stephanie, don't be angry, please. I know it's wrong to break rules, but then I am so tired of the stupid old plays out there, and the girls are so noisy and rude, and my head did ache, and the book was not a bad book—upon my word and honor it wasn't, mamma's! not a bit like a novel at all, and I did find it among the cabbage leaves last evening, and—"

Mademoiselle Stephanie knows of old that Miss Owenson is perfectly capable of going on in this strain without a single full stop for the next hour. Therefore, without a word, she pulls a letter out of her pocket and hands it to her pet pupil.

"I will overlook your disobedience this once, petite," she said, "because it is probably the very last time you will ever have a chance to disobey. Read your mamma's letter, my dear; I know what it contains, as it came inclosed in one to me. Cherie, mamma's voice absolutely falters,—"you—you are about to leave school."

Sydney Owenson rises to her feet, the great gray eyes dilate and grow almost black with some vague terror. She looks at her letter—a look of absolute affright, the last trace of color leaving her pearl-fair skin—then at mademoiselle.

"Papa," she falters. "Oh, mamma's! don't say papa is—"

"Worse? No, my dear. You poor child, you are as white as the wall. No, papa is not worse—it isn't that—it is—but read your letter, cherie; it will tell you all about it, and believe me, my dear, and mademoiselle lays two sun-colored old hands kindly on the girl's shoulders,—"no one in this school will regret the loss of one of its most troublesome pupils more than I shall."

She toddles away in her latest Miss Owenson to read her letter. "Ah," she sighs, "it is the best, the tenderest little heart after all. I shall never love another pupil so well. Only a baby of seventeen, and to be married in a month! *Heavens* the poor little one!"

Sydney tears open her letter; it is a lengthy, spidery, woman's scrawl.

"OWENSON PLACE, October 25, 18—"

"MY DEAR LITTLE DAUGHTER.—I have written to the Mademoiselles Chateauroux, telling them to have all things ready for your departure on Monday, the third of November. You are to leave school, and for good. Papa is not worse really, but thinks he is, and the pines for you. He has taken it into his head—you know how hypochondriacal he is—that he will die before the year ends, and he insists that you must be married at once, else he will not live to see it. Now don't worry about this, Sydney. I know how foolish you are concerning poor papa's whims, and it is only a whim. Bertie is here, came by the Cunard steamer from England three weeks ago, and is naturally all impatience to see you. It is a very absurd whim of papa's, I think myself, this marrying a child of seventeen and a boy of twenty-two; but what use is it my saying so? I was nine-and-twenty when I married Captain Owenson. Still, I am sure, I hope you will be happy; and Bertie's so good-tempered and gentlemanly and all that, that anyone might get along with him. Rebecca will reach Petit St. Jacques Saturday afternoon, and you will start for home on Monday morning. Papa has actually sent to Paris for your wedding dress, and pearls and veil, as though good enough could not have been got in New York City; but it is another of his whims to look down upon everything in this country, and think nothing fit for you that doesn't come from Europe. I'm sure sometimes I wonder he never married an American lady, or that he found a school on this continent fit for his only child. I know he would have sent you to the Sacre Cour at Paris, only he couldn't bear to put the ocean between himself and you. But this has nothing to do with it. So bid the young ladies and teachers good-by, and be ready to start on Monday morning with Rebecca."

"Your affectionate Mother."

"CHARLOTTE OWENSON."

"P. S.—Bertie sends his love and a kiss, he says, to all the pretty girls in the school. He is as foolish as ever, but very handsome and elegant, I must say. Christ College has improved him greatly. He wanted to accompany Rebecca, but, of course, I wouldn't hear of anything so improper as that."

C. O.

"P. S. No. 2.—By the by, papa says you may invite your particular friend, Miss Hendrick, if you like, to be one of your bridesmaids. He knew her aunt, Miss Phillis Dormer, in England, and her mother comes of one of the best families in Dorsetshire. As if the best family in Dorsetshire mattered in America. C. O."

CHAPTER II.

CYRILLA.

This long, loosely written, rambling letter dropped on Sydney's lap, her hands folded over it, and she sat strangely quiet, (for her) looking out at the faint opaline twilight sky. To leave school on Monday—! To be married in a month! Surely enough to startle any school-girl of seventeen. Besides being the daughter of the richest man, besides having double the spending money of any other girl in the pensionnat; besides having silks and laces and jewels as though she were five-and-twenty, and, "out," besides having beauty and talent and goodness and grace Sydney Owenson had one other—and still greater claim to be "queen rose" of Mlle. Stephanie's "rosebud garden of girls,"—she was engaged!

All and each of the four-and-thirty other boarders of mademoiselle—! Not to speak of the one-and-twenty day-scholars—looked forward in the fullness of time to a possible lover, a prospective engagement, and an ultimate husband, but a real lover and a bona fide engagement none of them yet attained, with the exception of Miss Owenson. That height of bliss Miss Owenson had reached in her sixteenth birthday. The midsummer vacation over, the young lady had returned to Canada from her paternal mansion—a solitary da-

mond ablaze on one slim finger, a locket (with a gentleman's portrait and a ring of brown hair) around her white throat—and calmly announced to all whom it might concern that she was engaged.

The first stunning abock of surprise over a torrent of questions poured upon the blissful fiancée.

"Oh! good gracious! Oh, Mon Dieu! was she really? Oh, how nice! Oh! *c'est charmant!* What was his name? Where did he live? How did it come about? What did he say? Was he handsome? Was he rich? Did papa and mamma know? Oh, what a love of a ring, and how splendid it was to be engaged at sixteen! And when, O Sydney! when were they going to be married?"

"There! there! there!" cried Miss Owenson shrilly, breaking up from fifty-six eager excited faces. "I am sorry I told you anything about it. One would think I was the only girl in the world ever engaged before. If you leave me alone I'll answer all your questions. Stand off, and let me see. His name? Well, his name is Albert Vaughan—Bertie Vaughan—a pretty name to begin with."

"Where does he live? He lives at Oxford at present; at least he was his way back here when I left home. How did it come about? Well, it didn't come about; it was always to be, destined from all time, and that's the way. Ever since I can remember anything, I remember being told that I was to marry Bertie some day, if I behaved myself—family arrangement, you see, like a thing in story. What did he say? Oh, well, he just came to me on my birthday, and slipped this ring on my finger, and said, 'I say, Syd, I want you to marry me this day twenty months or thereabouts, you know, and I said, 'All right, Bert, I will.' 'Is he handsome?' Handsome as an angel, Helen—brwn eyes, brown curling hair, fair complexion, rosy cheeks like a girl, small hands and feet, and the sweetest little love of a moustache! 'Is he rich?' Poor as a church mouse, Cyrilla—not got a sou in the earthly world; but as I am to have enough for both that doesn't signify. 'Do papa and mamma know?' Of course they know, goose! Bertie and I would never have thought of such a thing if papa hadn't told us to think of it. 'And when are we to be married?' Oh, I don't know—not for ever so long. I don't want to be married—it's dreadfully dowdy and stupid. We won't be married for ages—not till I'm old—oh! never so old—twenty-one may be. It's nice enough to be engaged, but married—bah-h-h!"

Miss Owenson pronounced her "bah!" with the disgusted look of one who swallows a nauseous dose, and sprang to her feet.

"I say, girl's! let's have a game of 'Prisoners' Base.' I'm dying for a romp. Come?"

Miss Owenson had a romp until the pale cheeks glowed like twin pink roses, and the vivid gray eyes streamed with laughing light. But from that hour a halo of romantic interest circled her.

She had a lover, she was engaged, she would be married in a year. Oh, happy, thrice happy Sydney Owenson! Every month or so came to her a letter bearing the English postmark, dated, "Ch. Ch., Oxford"—real, genuine love-letters! Mlle. Stephanie shook her head and past them over in fear and trembling to her engaged pupil. She had never had such a thing before, and to a certain extent it was demoralizing to the whole school.

Six-and-forty heads ran more on lovers than on lessons, an engagements than on "Talemaque" or "Chopin's Waltzes." Miss Owenson, as a matter of Christian duty, read those epistles of her young Oxonian faithfully aloud to her six-and-forty fellow students. On the whole they were rather a disappointment. They contained a great deal of news about boating on the Isis, riding across country, college supper parties and a jolly time generally, but very few glowing love-passages to his affianced. Indeed, beyond the "Dear little Syd" at the beginning, and "Your affectionate Bertie" at the end, they didn't contain a single protestation of the consuming passion which it is supposed possessed him.

"Of course not!" Sydney was wont to cry indignantly, when some of the sentimental young ladies objected to these love-letters on that head. "You wouldn't have Bertie spooning all the way across the Atlantic, would you? I suppose, Helen, you would like the sort of letters Lord Mortimer used to write to nobby-pamby, milk-and-waterish Amanda Fitzalan. 'Beloved of my soul! Ha! ha! I fancy I see Bert writing that sort of rubbish to me. He wouldn't do it twice, let me tell you!'"

As may be seen, Miss Owenson was not in the least sentimental herself—not one whit in love, in the common acceptance of the word, with Bertie Vaughan. "He was the dearest, jolliest old fellow in the world—Bertie," she was calmly accustomed to observe; "and since she must marry somebody sometime, she would rather marry Bertie than anybody else, but to go spooning as they did in books—no, not while either of them keep their senses."

She sits very quietly now, the letter on her lap, looking out at that pale yellow, frosty sky—a little pale, and very thoughtful.

Going to leave school—going to be married! All the old life to end, and the new to begin. And the old life had been such a good life, such a pleasant life; she was so fond of school and of all the girls—well, with about three-and-twenty exceptions. She never could play "Brother Hermit," or "Hunt the Slipper," or "Tag" any more—never any more! Married woman never jumped skipping ropes, played "Pass in the Corner," or got people to swing them until their heels touched the beam in the barn each time! Never! never! It was all dull and stupid, and dowdy, being married. And great tears rose up in Miss Owenson's gray eyes and splashed, one by one, down upon the fatal letter.

"All alone, Syd?" cries a brisk voice, and with a swish of dingy skirts, Miss Hendrick is in the room. "And a letter—another love-letter! Happy girl! Well, blessed are they who expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed" of whom I am one. And how is our beautiful Bertie?"

"It isn't from Bertie," answers Sydney, hastily wiping away the last tear. "It's from mamma, and—a great gulp—"O Cy, I'm going to leave school!"

"Happy girl once more! When and why?"

"On Monday, and—to be married!"

"On Monday, and—to be married! Happy, happy girl! I wish I were going to the leave school on Monday, and be married. I wouldn't sit by myself in the dark and mope, I can tell you. But what's all this hurry about?"

"Read the letter," says Miss Owenson, placing it in her hand, and looking out with a woe-begone face at the fast darkening evening sky. One, two, three, four, five, more evenings may she watch that little white, cold-looking, half-moon float up yonder among the tamaracs, five more evenings may she listen to the discordant shrieks of the thirty-four boarders making day hideouts, and then never more for all time. And another large tear comes plump down, at the misery of the thought, in her lap.

Cyrrilla Hendrick reads the letter, and throws it back with an envious sigh.

"What a lucky girl you are, Syd! A father and mother who dote upon you—a rich father and mother, a handsome young husband, wait-

ing for you, and all the freedom and gaiety of a married woman yours, at seventeen. While for me—ah, well!" with a bitter laugh, as poor Freddy used to say, "Life can't be all beer and skittles" for the whole of us.

"Freddy!" Sydney exclaimed, looking up at her friend with sudden curiosity, "that is the first time I ever heard you mention any man's name! Who is Freddy?"

"Ah, who indeed?" Miss Hendrick answers with another half-laugh. "Thereby hangs a tale, which I'm not inclined to tell at present. But I say again, what a happy girl you are, Sydney Owenson!"

"What, because I am to be married next month, Cy?" Sydney cries, opening her great eyes in unfeigned wonder. "You can't mean that."

"I mean that, and everything about your life. You are an heiress, you will be a beauty, you have people who love you, you have school friends wherever you go. Why, here in school the girls swoon by you, you are snuffy, priggish, dry-eyed, little Mademoiselle Stephanie, in her dreamy way is fond of you. At sixteen you wear diamonds and walk in silk array! While—"

Again she stopped, with a gesture that was almost passionate in the intensity of its envy. Sydney looked at her in wonder. The bitterness of her tone and words was a new revelation; it was a contrast indeed to the unusually cool, almost insolent serenity of Cyrilla Hendrick's manner.

"While you, Cy," Sydney supplemented, "are ten times over better looking than I am, sing better, play better, paint and draw better, speak four languages, and are the cleverest girl, mamma's! she ever had in her school. You have an aunt who is fabulously rich, so everybody says, who has adopted you, and whose heiress you are to be. While, as for being married—"

Cyrrilla Hendrick laughed, as Miss Owenson faltered and paused, all her easy insouciance of manner returned.

"While, as for being married, I have only to walk over to St. Jacques Barracks and ask any of the officers, and they will take me on the spot—is that what you want to say, Syd? And I sing well, play well, paint well, and am a famous linguist! Lucky for me I am, since these accomplishments are my stock and trade, with which, until some man does compassionate me, I am to earn the bread I eat."

"I don't understand you."

"Don't you? You never suspected, I suppose, that my brilliant role in the drama of life is that of a governess?"

"Governess! What nonsense, Cyrilla. The rich Miss Dormer's heiress niece!"

"The rich Miss Dormer's heiress niece! Sydney, would you like to know exactly how much Miss Dormer means to do for her pauper niece, Cyrilla Hendrick?"

"If you please, Cy. You know you and your history are darkest mysteries to Mademoiselle Chateauroux's boarders."

Cyrrilla laughed, still standing behind her friend. I knew it, *cherie belle*, and mysteries we all like to remain. Let me unveil this darkness to you a little. I was born in Paris eighteen years ago, in a garret—mark that, daughter of Mammon!—and my mother was the daughter of a baronet; my father was the only brother of the rich Phillis Dormer. My father was one of the handsomest men, one of the cleverest men, and one of the most utterly unprincipled men in Europe—a thorough-paced adventurer, in fact, as Aunt Phill takes care to impress upon my innocent mind every time I see her—an out-and-out Bohemian.

Before I was twelve years old I had traversed the Continent from one end to the other, and had a smattering of every European language. No wonder I studied them with facility now. When I was twelve my father came to England, his native land, and there, in the parish of Bloomsbury, we set up an hotel for moderately respectable Bohemianism. My mother was dead—luckily for her, poor soul!—and I was housekeeper in the Bloomsbury establishment—think of that, Syd—at twelve years old! From that until I was sixteen, I kept my father's house, and I saw more of life—real genuine life—in those three years than you, mademoiselle—only child and heiress—will ever see in your whole respectable, rich, Phillistine existence! Good heaven, Syd! how happy I used to be with my handsome, clever, vagabond father and my poor, dear little Fred."

She stopped—passionate pain, passionate regret in her face and voice. Sydney Owenson sat listening with bated breath to this marvelous and rather shocking revelation.

"It was poverty, Syd, but picturesque poverty; that meant truffled turkey and champagne to-day, and a dry crust and a cup of water to-morrow; a seat in the upper tier of a Strand theatre or Astley's circus among the gods of the gallery, big bearded men to take me on their knee, and kiss me, and pet me; men who wrote books and painted pictures, who wore sock or buekin, who got tipsy on gin and water or Claret, as their finances stood. Men who taught me to roll up their cigarettes, and to light them after. By the way, Syd, Cyrilla broke off her half-bitter, half-cynical tone, ending in a sudden laugh, "do you remember the night, after I came here first, that Miss Jones caught me smoking a rose-scented cigarette, a dozen of you standing around in an awe-struck and admiring row? She told Mademoiselle Stephanie, as in duty bound, and got me punished. I vowed vengeance, and the vendetta has waged between us ever since."

"I remember, Cy. And what a superior being you seemed to me, to be able to sit there and smoke off four cigarettes without wincing once! Go on!"

"Oh, well!" Cyrilla said coolly, "there's nothing more to go on about. When I was sixteen, Aunt Phill sent for me, and I bade farewell to old England and my jolly Bedouin life, and came to America, exchanged the tents of vagabondia for the red brick mansion of respectability. She found me half-savage, wholly uneducated, according to her notions, and knowing a great deal I would do much better without. She sent me here—unfolding something of my antecedents to horrified mamma's, and I had to pledge myself to keep my disreputable history to myself before I could be taken into this spotless fold of youth and innocence. That is three years ago—I am almost nineteen, and at Christmas I am to leave school for good."

"To go and live with Miss Dormer?"

"To go and live with Miss Dormer, in the dreariest, grimmest old house in America; companion to the cross-st, spiteful old woman on earth! Don't be shocked, Syd—she! I'm to read to her, write to her, play for her, sing for her, sew for her, feed the birds and cats, and run her errands, all for my clothes and keep."

"And her fortune when she dies?"

"Not a bit of it! She has two wills made, assigned. One bequeaths her hundred thousand dollars to endow an asylum for superannuated maiden ladies; the other bequeaths that sum to myself, on condition—"

"Well?" Sydney cried breathlessly.

"On condition that I'll swear—swear on the Bible, mind!—to do something she wants me to do. I haven't taken the oath yet, and I believe, oath or no oath, she will never trust me an inch further than she can see me. 'There is bad blood in my niece Cyrilla.'—Miss

Hendrick grows dramatic when she narates, it is a high-pitched old woman's voice that speaks—"all the Hendricks were reprobates all over, every one!" "Do we gather grapes of thorns, or eggs of thistles?" My niece Cyrilla is—fortunately—the last of the tribe, a Hendrick to her finger-tips, and mark my words! my niece Cyrilla will come to no good end."

"Ugh, how horrid!" said Miss Owenson, with something between a laugh and a shudder. "I wonder, thinking that she ever troubled with you at all?"

"So do I wonder. She seems to utilize me until the final catastrophe comes, and I disappear in the outer darkness to which I was born. It is a wonderful old woman—Aunt Phill! And sometimes, Syd, sometimes, the handsome youthful face darkened and grew sombre, "when I think of what my past was, when I think of what my father is, when I think of what my future is likely to be, I rank Aunt Phill among the prophets, and believe, with her, that her niece Cyrilla will come to no good end!"

CHAPTER III.

SCHOOL-GIRL GOSSIP.

There is a silence for a while. Cyrilla Hendrick has walked away to the curtainless school-room window, and stands looking out at the pale, chill, twilight sky, where a white moon hangs silvery, a few yellow, frosty, sparkling stars near. The tamaracs shiver and toss their feathery green plumes in the evening breeze, a breeze that bears a prophecy of coming winter even now in its breath. Miss Hendrick's handsome brunette face looks darker and sadder than Sydney Owenson has ever seen it before.

"Ten minutes and the study bell will ring, and this horrid tumult end, for which *Dieu merci*. Look at them, Syd, a motley crowd, my masters, a motley crowd." Of course, all this she told you is strictly *sub rosa*. Mademoiselle Stephanie, poor old snuffy soul, would go out of her senses if she thought I was corrupting her favorite pupil by such improper conversation.

She half-turned around, all her gloom gone, the airy ease of manner uncommon in a school-girl, and which constituted this school-girl's chief charm, back. Independently of wealth and social position, and no one on earth thought more of wealth and social position than this waif of vagabondia, she liked Sydney Owenson for her own sake.

"I promised not to tell, you know, Syd, and reprobate as Aunt Phill thinks me, I like to keep my word. I have kept it for three years; all those noisy girls think, as you thought an hour ago, that my life, like their lives, has been the quintessence of dull, drab-colored gentility. Your papa was a captain in the English navy once, wasn't he, and is a great stickler for good birth and breeding? I wonder if he would ask the rich and respectable Miss Phillis Dormer's niece to be your bridesmaid if he were listening now?"

"If papa knew you as I do, he would like and admire you as I do," Sydney cried warmly. "Who could help it? I never saw a man yet whom you did not fascinate in ten minutes if you chose."

"If I chose?" Cyrilla laughed. "Ah, yes, Syd, the men like me, and always will; let that be my comfort. I shall be one of those women whom other women look upon as a scandal, and know as their natural enemy at sight, but men will like me to the end of the chapter. Only be sure of this, pretty little Sydney." She took the pearl-fair face between her two hands, and stooped and kissed her. "You need never fear me."

"Fear you, Cy? What nonsense! What do you mean?"

"This Mr. Bertie Vaughan is handsome, you say, Syd?" was Cyrilla's inapposite answer. "Let me look at his photo again."

As a rule Miss Owenson wore her lover's picture and locket affectionately in her trunk, but she chanced to have it on to-day. She snatched the slender yellow chain off her neck and handed it to her friend. She had been touched strangely by Cyrilla's confidence, more touched still by the unexpected caress. They had been good friends and staunch comrades during the past three years, with the average of school girl quarrels and make ups; but never before had Cyrilla Hendrick been known to kiss her or any other creature in the school.

She was wonderfully chary of enthusiasm or caresses; set down as "that proud, conceited thing" by her fellow boarders, admired and envied for her superior cleverness and ease of manner, and dark, aristocratic, high-bred face, liked by few, Sydney Owenson chief among them, and cordially hated by the many. Without knowing why, without being able to reason on the matter, they instinctively felt that she was one of them, but not like them.

She came into their midst with her pauper head held high, a sort of defiance in her black, derisive eyes, a sort of superior contempt for them and their ignorance of life in her slight sarcastic smile. Wonderfully reticent for a girl of sixteen, she yet said things, and did things, besides the smoking of cigarettes, that proved that she had lived, before coming here, in a very different world from any they had ever known. The sketchy outline of her life she had given to Sydney Owenson—the sketchy outline only—there were details that might have been filled in, which would have raised every red-gold hair on Miss Owenson's pretty head aloft with dismay. She had seen life with her "handsome, clever, reprobate father," as luckily it falls to the lot of few daughters ever to see it. Bacchanalian nights of gambling, song-singing, wine-drinking, and festive uproar. There was not a capital in Europe which she and her doll had not visited at the age of twelve. She had spent three whole months behind his chair at Baden-Baden, with a pin and a perforated card, and starved and fasted as he lost or won. All the jolly outlaws of Bohemia had lounged in the shabby rooms of "Jack Hendrick," where a perpetual "tobacco parliament" seemed to reign. Scions of aristocracy, youthful sprigs of gentility, deep in the books of the children of Israel, made it their headquarters and lounging-place, and lost their self-sovereign to their genial host. Clever painters, whose pictures hung on the walls in the Royal Academy, had painted "Little Beauty Hendrick" as Cyrilla had been named—painted her as Onipida, as Undine, as Hebe, as gypsies, as angels, as everything a plump, pretty, black-eyed rosbird of a child could be painted. Clever actors gave her orders to their plays, had coached her in small private theatricals. Old Jean Jacques Dando, teacher of the ballet of the Princess Theatre, taught her to dance, and the first violinist taught her to play the fiddle. She could jabber in five different languages at twelve, and read French novels by the wholesale. Tall booted and spurred military-wholesaler had carried her aloft on their shoulders, and taught her to roll and light their cigarettes. Midnight, as a rule, was this little dame's hour of lying down, and nobody but "time of rising up." Then, in the midst of this jolly, vagabond career, came Miss Phillis Dormer's offer and its acceptance.

"Will you go, beauty?" her father said, doubtfully. "It will be beastly dull without you, but the old girl's rich; and intends to make you her heiress, no doubt! She'll send

you to school, and do the handsome thing by you when she dies. Will you go?"

"Yes, father, I'll go," Cyrilla answered, promptly. "I'll pack my trunk and be ready at once. Freddy says there's a steamer to sail day after to-morrow."

"Ah! Freddy says," her father repeated, still looking at her doubtfully. "Look here, Beauty! I wouldn't say anything about Freddy, or the rest of them over there, if I were you. Just tell the old girl and the other Phillistines you meet that you came of poor—poor, but honest—parents you know. Mamma's word about the card-playing and the scampering over the world, and—the whole thing, in short."

"You may trust me, father. I know when to hold my tongue and when to speak. I haven't lived with you sixteen years for nothing," calmly says Mademoiselle Cyrilla.

"No, by Jove!" Jack Hendrick cried, admiringly. "You're the cleverest little thing that ever breathed, Beauty! You know on which side your bread's buttered. And you'll not forget the dear old dad, eh, Cy? out there among the purple and fine linen, and your first taste of respectability?"

So Cyrilla came and was received by Miss Dormer—a pale, dark girl, tall and slim, quiet, silent and demure. But Aunt Phill had the keenest old eyes that ever sparkled in the head of a maiden lady of sixty, and read her like a book.

"Ha!" the old voice scornfully cried; "you lived sixteen years with Jack Hendrick and then come to me and try to take me in with your mock-modest airs! But I'm an old bird, and not to be caught with chaff. You're a very pretty girl, Cyrilla—you take after your father in that—and you hold your beggar's head well up, which I like to see. You take that and your aquiline nose from your mother. Your mother was a fool, my dear, as I suppose you know, and proved her folly to all the world, by running away with handsome, penniless, secondarily Jack Hendrick. She was the daughter of a baronet, and engaged to a colonel of the Guards—Lord Hepburn to-day—and she ran away one night, just three weeks before her appointed wedding, with your father. Ah! well, she paid for that bit of romance, and is in her grave long ago—the very best place for her. But you're a Hendrick, my niece Cyrilla—a Hendrick to the backbone, and a precious bad lot, I have no doubt. I never knew a Hendrick yet who came to a good end—no, not one! And you take care, niece Cyrilla, or you'll come to a bad end, too."

"I dare say I shall," niece Cyrilla answered, coolly, seeing in a moment that perfect frankness was best with this extraordinary old fairy godmother. "My father always taught me that coming to grief was the inevitable lot of all things here below. At least I hope I shall do it gracefully."

"I'm going to send you to school," the old lady pursued, for three years, and mind you make the most of your time. You are ignorant as a Hottentot now of all you ought to know, and horribly thorough in all you ought not. I shall send you to the Demoiselles Chateauroux, at Petit St. Jacques—a very strict school and a very dull place, where even you cannot get into mischief. And mind don't you go contaminating your fellow pupils by tales of vagabond life! Don't offend me, niece Cyrilla; I warn you of that."

"I don't intend to, Aunt Phill," the girl answered, good-humoredly. "I shall study hard, and be a credit to you; trust me. I know my ignorance, and am anxious to shake the dust of vagabondism off my feet as you can possibly be. I shall do you honor at school."

She had kept her word. She was brilliantly clever, and amazed and delighted her teachers by her progress. She was the pride of the school at each half-yearly exhibition; her playing, her singing were such as had never been heard within these walls before. And in the small milk-and-water dramas performed on these occasions she absolutely electrified all beholders. In truth she did it so well that the Demoiselles Chateauroux were almost alarmed.

"She goes on more like a real play actress than a school girl," they said; "it can't be the first time she has tried parlor theatricals."

It was not, indeed. And at one of these exhibitions a little incident had occurred that disturbed Mademoiselle Stephanie more and more. The rooms were crowded. "Cinderella" had been dramatized expressly for the occasion and "Miss C. Hendrick" came on as the Prince, in plumed cap and silk doublet, acting her part, as usual, *con amore*, and making much more violent love than ever Mlle. Stephanie had intended to the Cinderella of the piece. As she came gracefully forward before the audience, singing a song, a tall, dashing-looking man, an officer newly arrived from England, had started up.

"It is!" he exclaimed; "by Jupiter, it is! Beauty Hendrick!"

Miss Hendrick had flashed one electric glance from her black eyes upon him, and the play went on. People stared; the Demoiselle Chateauroux turned pale; pupils pricked up curious little ears and looked askance of the big trooper. "He knew Cy Hendrick, and called her Beauty. What did it mean?"

The performance over, Major Powerscourt sought out Mlle. Stephanie and a low and earnest conversation ensued—the gentleman pleading, the lady inexorable.

"But I know her in England, knew her intimately, by Jove!" said the gallant major, putting his long red moustache in perplexity. "Just let me speak to her one moment, mademoiselle!"

Mademoiselle was resolute.

"I would be very happy, monsieur," was her answer, polite, but inexorable, "but it is her aunt's wish that she makes no new gentleman acquaintances and renews no old ones. What Monsieur the major asks is, I regret, impossible."

"Confound her aunt!" Major Powerscourt muttered inwardly, but he only bowed and turned away. "Little Beauty Hendrick! and here! By Jove! it will go hard with me though I don't see her."

See her he did not. Mademoiselle Stephanie spoke a few toned words to her tall pupil. Miss Hendrick listened with down-cast eyes and closed lips; then she bowed.

"It shall be as mamma's pleases, of course," she answered quietly. "I have no wish to transgress even the slightest of my aunt's commands."

With the words she left the parlors, and appeared no more. Next morning she went for the midsummer vacation to "Dormer Lodge." When she returned, the dangerous Major Powerscourt was gone.

Miss Jones the second English teacher, had been one of the witnesses of this scene. Miss Jones set her thin lips, and drew her own conclusions. She hated Cyrilla Hendrick with an absolute hatred, hated her for her beauty and that indefinable air of haughty high-bred grace that encircled the girl, hated her for her bright cleverness and talent—hated her most of all for her cool independence to herself. There was a long debt standing between these two—a long debt of petty tyrannies on the teacher's part of serious smiling indulgence on the pupil's.

"And if the day ever comes," Miss Hendrick said, "I shall be glad to see you."

Miss Jones was wont to think—"and I think

it will—I'll pay off every affront, every sneer, every scornful smile and insinuation with compound interest!"

"That day was nearer than Miss Jones dreamed."

CHAPTER IV.