

Portugal laurels and yew, and sunny bits of lawn, one of which boasted a magnificent Himalaya pine feathering to the ground, and borders blazing with colour and sunlight, and shady nooks, cool and green, of rock-work clothed with ferns, and ground-ivy and periwinkle and violets. The house itself and all its dependencies were tapestried with Virginia creeper, clematis, jasmine, ivy, and crimson China roses, and against the coach-house wall, in the face of the south-west sun, was trained a vine that in even moderately hot summers yielded rich clusters of yellow-tinted sweet-watered grapes southern vineyards need not have despised. For the place was warm and dry and sheltered, and everything about it thrived, and seemed to take pleasure in growing and spreading, and Nelly loved and tended them all, and they rewarded her.

To this home Nelly had come as a little child after her mother's death, and she remembered no other. That was a good many years ago, for she was now two-and-twenty, though she hardly looked so much. For she was a little thing, plump, with a round face, smiling dark eyes, and a bright brown complexion; one of those girls whose good looks consist in perfect health, in colouring and expression, and a certain freshness of appearance—freshness moral as well as physical—that keep the owner young for long. Her uneventful and unambitious life had hitherto passed in that happy monotony that is best suited to such natures as hers; cheerful, bright, contented ones, that take the daily duties of their humble lives as pleasures, not sacrifices, and are yet not without a touch of refinement that makes the duties less prosaic. She need not have been now keeping her father's house, had she been minded to keep house of her own. Two years ago her father had had a half-pupil, half-assistant, Mr. Baker, who had a little money of his own, and expected to have some more, and who would fain have had her promise to become Mrs. Baker when he should have acquired sufficient age and instruction "to set up on his own hook," as he expressed it. But Nelly had not been so minded. She did not care for Mr. Baker; she first laughed at him, and then, when he became piteous in consequence, she was sorry for him, very sorry. But she could not marry him. When she thought of her father as a companion (for not being in the faintest degree in love, she looked at the two men in this light), and then thought of Mr. Baker, she felt it could never, never be. And she had not for a moment at any time regretted or repented her decision, but went on in her quiet way, taking her chance of what the future might bring her.

Among Dr. Britton's occasional patients was a very grand family indeed. The Earl of Leytonstone had an estate about three miles from Summerfield, and there he passed a part of every year with his two children, the little Lord Leithbridge and Lady Agnes Collingwood, who, under the care of a young tutor and an elderly governess, for their mother was dead, lived almost entirely at Leytonstone Hall.

The young tutor was a north countryman, whose father, a poor clergyman, holding a little cure in a village among the hills in Westmoreland, had, seeing the boy's aptitudes, struggled hard to send him to college. He had educated him himself up to that point, and then Andrew Graham had entered Oxford as a sizer, and had worked, and read, and lived hard, as few men in that ancient seat of learning are given to do. He had carried all honours before him, he could write and speak five modern languages, and read seven; he knew at his fingers' ends all the best books in all these, beside the classical tongues; but of men and women he knew absolutely nothing. Poor, proud, intensely shy, and devoted to study, he lived entirely apart from even the men of his own standing in his own college. In their sport as in their work he kept aloof, only fortifying himself against the exhausting nature of his labours by prodigious walks, keeping always the same pace up hill and down dale, choosing the most solitary paths, and never heeding weather. In the course of time he had been so fortunate as to obtain his present post, that of tutor to the little Lord Leithbridge, and

librarian to his father, who boasted the possession of one of the finest private libraries in England; and as his pupil was but twelve, his work with regard to him was so light, that the greater part of his time could easily be devoted to the labour he delighted in—the care and arrangement of his beloved books.

Poor Andrew, he was not comely to behold, and was young in nothing but his years. He was pale, and had thin whiskers, and wore high shirt-collars, and hesitated in his speech. He was so intensely, so painfully shy, and spoke so rarely, that when called upon to speak it seemed as though he was too unused to the employment of uttered language to be able to find the words he wanted. In the presence of women, and especially young women, he absolutely trembled. It was long before he could reply, without starting and shrinking, to Mr. Brereton's—Lady Agnes's governess—softly spoken questions, and had Lady Agnes herself been more than thirteen when he first entered on his duties, I doubt if he would have ventured into her presence.

And yet it was not in human nature, in young human nature, at all events, to live without some companionship beyond that of a child. Andrew had had a bad and a long illness, and in this Dr. Britton had attended him, and when he recovered, it somehow came about that the patient had, he hardly knew how himself, found that it often happened that in his walks his steps tended towards the doctor's cottage; and when he came to the garden gate, that was just an opening in the mass of green that surrounded and overtopped it, giving a peep through to the house along the sunny gravel walk, lying between borders of glowing flowers, he remembered he had something to say to, or something to ask of, the doctor. You will think that the doctor's daughter might have been for something in this attraction; but it was not so. If he caught a glimpse of her in the garden, or heard her voice, he passed on his way with a nervous sense of the narrow escape he had encountered. This was at first; after having accidentally encountered her a few times when calling on her father, and found that she took little notice of him, he became more reassured, and beyond a certain amount of trepidation in taking off his hat, and replying to her simple greeting, he learned to meet her without further discomposure.

Nelly would look after him with a pitying wonder, and some curiosity. Such a nature and such a life as his to her, genial, energetic, expansive, was a painful puzzle.

"Is he always like that, papa?"

"Always, I believe, my dear, in company."

"Then he never can know anybody."

"Yes, I fancy in the course of time he might get to know people to a certain extent. He does me—a little."

"He must be very unhappy, papa?"

"Except when among his books, or in his long walks, he certainly must feel rather wretched, I should imagine."

Nelly thought about it a little more, and then went to feed her poultry. But there was a young cock whose false and painful position in the poultry-yard would somehow bring back to her mind the recollection of Mr. Graham. He had not long come to cock's estate, and he was thin and not very sleek in his plumage; and the older and stronger cock had bullied him and put him down, till he hardly dared to call his life his own. He was not naturally a coward; he had made a good fight for it at first, and indeed it was his asserting himself against the supremacy of King Chanticleer that had first awakened that arrogant bird's wrath against him. But he was no match for Chanticleer, and had, after innumerable defeats and sore maulings, been compelled to succumb; and he now loitered about in corners, and moped about in sheds, and took snatches of food in a wary fashion, on the outskirts of the group gathered round Nelly, ready to fly if ever Chanticleer looked his way, and even nervous if the hens pecked at him.

"Poor fellow," Nelly said, throwing him a handful of barley, and cutting off Chanticleer in his instant attempt to drive him away from it; "you certainly are very like Mr. Graham—very like. I think I shall call you Andy; get away,

Chanticleer; I won't have Andy bullied and his life made miserable, poor fellow!" and another handful of barley fell to his share. From that day Nelly took Andy under her especial care and patronage, and fed and petted him till he grew fat and well-liking, and learned to play his second fiddle so creditably that Chanticleer held him in sufficient respect no longer to molest him.

Meanwhile the months were lengthening into years, and Andrew Graham plodded on at the old work, in the old way. But a change had come within, though the outer man showed nothing of it—as yet. The cause may as well be told at once; the poor student had fallen in love, with the sort of love that is certain to awaken in the hearts of such men when it does awake, with Lady Agnes, now sixteen.

The word love is used in so many phases where there is no passion at all, that it fails to convey any notion of the feeling that possessed the whole being of the poor tutor. It is nothing to say it was part of himself; the old man was lost in the new identity it gave birth to. Day and night it was the one ever-present reality, all else fading into shadowy insignificance.

Lady Agnes was a pretty girl, very much like a thousand other pretty, well-brought-up, simple girls.

She had large limpid grey eyes, and a fair pure skin, and her colour went and came easily in sweet girlish blushes, and all her thoughts and ways were innocent and natural. She was not the least clever, and but moderately accomplished; for Mrs. Brereton wisely thought that good general culture was more to be desired than the attempt to force mediocre abilities into the painful acquirement of arts, in which her pupil never could hope to excel, and in this view Lord Leytonstone fully coincided.

It was probably the charm of this very girlish simplicity that in reality captivated Andrew's heart; but his imagination acted the part of a fairy godmother, and bestowed on the idol every gift of mind and body that woman could possess and man adore.

This love, that dared not relieve itself by any outward expression, that entertained no prospect in the future, that hoped for nothing, that aspired to nothing tangible, that was all concentrated in the breast of him who conceived it, rode him like a beautiful nightmare, lovely in itself, but to him cruelly, pitilessly tyrannous, taking possession of all his faculties, goading him into a sort of abiding frenzy that made him wild and haggard and distracted.

At times, while giving the usual daily lessons to his pupil, the boy would look up to his instructor, wondering at the trembling hand, the husky voice, the working features, and sometimes at the strangely absent words that fell from him. Then Andrew would try to recall his senses, nail his attention to the work he was engaged in, and, the task completed, rush forth and wander alone for hours among the pine-woods and on the hill-sides, striving by movement and fatigue to still the spirit that possessed him.

Such a condition of things could hardly fail to escape Mrs. Brereton's quietly observant eye, nor was it long before she guessed something of the real state of the case, and great was the perplexity into which it threw her. Lord Leytonstone was abroad, and though she might have spoken to him on the subject, she hardly knew how to put it in writing. Lady Agnes must, of all others, be kept in ignorance of the passion she had inspired; and though Mrs. Brereton had sufficient confidence in Andrew to feel pretty well assured that he would not seek to make it known to her, she dreaded, seeing the nature of the man, some involuntary outburst, some accidental circumstance occurring to bring it to light. Should she speak to himself? Yet, though in her own mind almost persuaded of the truth of her suspicion, he had done nothing to justify her in opening the matter to him, while it rested on no more tangible grounds than it did at present. So the good woman turned the matter over in her mind, waiting for some feasible mode of solving the difficulty to present itself.

One morning her pupil said, after having, as