MC2397

POOR DOCUMENT

SHIRLEY CARSTONE.

By ELIZA ARCHARD.

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CHAPTER I.

THE STONE HOUSE.

The teacher rend:

Forgetting herself, as was her wont, when she saw the flames come near him, she took leave of him and bade him go farther off, only asking that he would lift up the cross on high that she might see. He went a little farther off, but still near enough to hear her say to the last, in the fire, that her voices were of God. As the flames rose about her and drew her breath away, she told him in her soft, clear tones that she still heard her voices in the air. And they said to her:

Daughter of God, go on! Be not dismayed at thy martyrdom. Thou shalt enter at last into the paradise of God.

Then her head sank and her spirit went to Him.

"Are the heroes and saints all dead?" asked Shirley. "Has there ever been a saint since Joan of Arc was burned at the stake?"

The teacher closed the book. "My child," said he, "the world never knows its saints and martyrs till 200 years after they are dead. There are heroes always. Heroic men and women live and walk the earth to-day and their fellow men know it not. A century later and mankind will read of them and wonder at the blindness of those who knew not their own best and bravest. But we don't burn martyrs at the stake any more, Shirley. We torture their souls and let their bodies die a natural death."

"I don't quite understand," said the girl.

"You don't understand? You never will, I hope. Marshal your army of Carstones and go home, General Shirley. The picnic is over."

The teacher turned into the path toward the village.

"Good-by, Mr. Morrison," said the girl, looking after him.

"Good-by, General Shirley."

GENERAL SHIRLEY.

The sun was setting. Up on the hillside the windows of the old stone house shone glorified.

There were six of the Carstone children under the big willow by the mill race that afternoon. Names and ages respectively: Shirley, 14; Tom, 9; Percy, 7; Brownie, 5; Pet, 3, and Baby, the ruler of them all, not quite 6 months.

The old stone house stood upon a hillside. It is there still, for that matter. It was near a century old when our Carstones lived there. A great, cool, double porch extended across its front. The little windows were like the loopholes of a fort. The walls were a foot thick. There were deep, sunny window seats, where generations of kittens and Carstone babies alike curled up and went to sleep.

The house had belonged to the family almost from the pioneer days. The grim, fort like walls had echoed many and many a year to the sweetest music of all the earth—the laughter of children. Shirley Carstone's grandmother was born there, and her father.

The family history, as far back as could be known, had been an especially bright and sunny one. So much of innocent mirth had sounded through those wide old rooms; so many years of gentle, tender, happy home life had passed there, that the very walls themselves seemed to have caught at length some of the joy and light. It was a fine, strong blooded race, with never a hereditary ailment of mind or body, never an inherited flaw of meanness or weakness. No Carstone had ever shown himself a coward or been faithless to a friend. There was a knightliness, a gentleness, a courage and purity in the blood. It ran through the men and women alike.

Great orchards and fields surrounded the stone house. At the foot of the hill a wide, deep brook ran, heavily fringed with beeches and shiny barked sycamore. A stone's throw from the house was a big water mill. It belonged with the estate, and it, too, was two generations old. Higher up, the brook had been partly turned off into a deep, clear mill race. The water glided down and turned the huge mill wheel as softly as if it was afraid of disturbing somebody's afternoon nap.

Ah, those days were before the age of iron and steam!

It was hereabout that successive families of Carstones had played. The hillsides were covered still with forest. Shirley and the little ones played in their day as the others did before them. They darted in and out among the trees like squirrels. They played bopeep like spots of sunshine and shadow over the mill wheel. They rode the colts bareback and ran races with the calves and the shaggy house dog. They whistled to the bob whites and catbirds till the feathered creatures knew not which was their own mate and which a little rogue of a Carstone.

In the spring they dug the turkey pea, the bloodroot and the fragrant smelling sassafras. In the fall they gathered the paw paw and the hickory nut. In the winter they set traps for rabbits and built snow forts or sat by the wide fireplace, where the blazing hickory logs crackled, and guessed riddles. When they parted for the night they sang the songs their mother taught them.

Not a tree in the forest but they knew from its leaf; not a flower or a shrub but they named by its name; not a bird or a wild creature of the woods but they knew its haunts and its habits.

They had a menagerie of pets, these woodland children. There was Sherry, the tame crow. Sherry had whipped the poultry yard, till every pullet ran and hid at the sight of him. He chased the hens from their nests and devoured the eggs. At odd spells he made a lunch off the buttons of old Sam's coat. He would alight upon the bare head of that respectable colored gentleman at wholly unexpected times and tangle his toes in the dignified gray wool. Then Sam howled with wrath. Then, too, every curly headed Carstone dodged around the house, choking with hidden laughter, while the old man made complaint to their father.

"Fo' de Lawd, if dat ar crow don't stop his foolishness dar'll be a dead bird roun' dis plantation, sho'. An' dem chillen a laffin' fit to kill."

There was Felix, the educated pig, who was quite a gentleman. There was Billy, a youthful black sheep of the male sex. He was erstwhile as sweet and innocent a lambkin as ever opened his eyes on a sinful world. But with the lapse of time Billy had grown bold and bad. After that Billy wasn't a pet any more.

But there were plenty left to keep the circus going. There were so many indeed that the young ones could hardly find names for them. After the new schoolmaster came he helped them out. He taught Shirley Latin, and told wonderful tales of Greeks and Romans. The children gave the birds and beasts they tamed the names of these brave old heathen. A frisky young squirrel they named Dido. They were at a loss at first what to call the pair of colts that came and ate apples from their hands. But Mr. Morrison told them stories from the Odyssey, the Iliad and the Æneid till they took sides and fought the siege of Troy over again. They named the blooded colts Ulysses and Penelope.

There was a drab mouse that would scamper up Percy's sleeve and hide, and eat cheese and toast off a plate at the table. The schoolmaster said it looked like their sister Brownie when she peeped out from under her sun bonnet. They called the mouse Brownie. Snow, the pullet would "possum" and pretend to go to sleep on Brownie's bed, to the ineffable delight of the youngest among the merry crew.

The chronicler of the fortunes of the Carstones may well be pardoned for lingering over such idle nonsense. They themselves looked back to those days in after years as to a paradise. Heaven was in very truth about them in their infancy. Trouble enough came in later times to one and another. But in the saddest days there was still a remembrance of the old stone house. They were reared in the gentlest, kindliest way. Theirs was the ideal childhood. Despair, disease, sin even, might crush them in deadly fold later—naught could rob them of the power to look back and say:

But I was happy once!
Fortunate such children!

CHAPTER II.

SHIRLEY.

They were wholesome pretty children, the five whom "General Shirley" marshaled for the home camp at sunset. Tom was a sturdy, broad shouldered lad—a frank, honest fellow. They called him the governor.

Percy was a little blue eyed lad, who took a childish interest in all living creatures. He studed the ways of birds and butterflies. He prisoned shining winged beetles and watched their efforts to escape. He peered into snake holes, and birds' nests, and rabbit burrows. His mother called him her little Paul Pry.

Then came Brownie, a dancing sunbeam of a creature, who seemed good for nothing but getting into mischief. She was the most thoughtless child of the six, and the most unlucky. A tangle of dark curls covered her head, and ever and anon tumbled down over her wide brown eyes. She was continually in trouble, always drawing on the rest for help and sympathy.

"Whatever will become of Brownie?" said their mother.

"Whatever will become of the whole pack?" said their father. "You can't teach them all any longer. They ought to be in school this day, every little pest of them. But where to send them I don't know. We can't let them away from home, can we?"

Their mother shook her head. It would have been like sending part of herself away.

"I know what to do with 'em!" cried little Percy. "Send 'em to the new school teacher. He plays the 'Star Spangled Banner' on the violin, and has a glass case full of butterflies and humming birds."

"And the boys say he goes fishing with them, and shows them how to bait a hook better than old Pete himself can do it. He's a good teacher," chimed in Tom.

"And he shows the girls how to make pictures, and he picks the children up when they get knocked over in the mud," lisped Brownie.

"They say he was educated over the sea, and that he knows Latin and Greek. Yes, and he can write poetry, too. They never had a teacher here before who could write poetry."

It was a softer voice that spoke this time—a voice that had a sweet, thrilling ring. It was Shirley who spoke.

Shirley was the flower and the star of them all.

Older by several years than any of the others, she exercised remarkable influence over them. Indeed, among the children they knew, she was the head and the leader. Not that she seemed old and overgrave for her years. No sweeter, sunnier child alive than she. Her merry, rippling laughter was like the music of a bird song. Her hair was light brown. She wore it in the fashion of the time, in long, heavy braids. She was tall and strong for her years, with straight, black eyebrows, and large beautiful eyes, black at night and clear bright gray in the daytime. Wonderful eyes they were, reflecting, as face answers to face in the glass, the many sided nature of the soul within. Now they flashed with scorn and anger, like fire from a flint; again they were tender and pearly as the dewdrop in the heart of a lily. Sometimes an intensely seeing, rapt look lay in them, as though all the things that are had been somehow burned away in the white fire of thought, and this child looked far beyond and saw centuries into the future, and the things that are to be. They were strangely magnetic too. She drew whom she chose toward her by a look.

"When Shirley looks at you, you must come," said Brownie.

She was a very child in some respects, innocent and trusting, believing everything that was told her, as if she had been 5 years old. As a scholar she was the pride of her parents and the prodigy of the neighborhood. All studies came alike to her; she was easily master in them all. In practical matters it was the same. Whatever work needed to be done, such as little country maidens were wont to perform, her quick, strong hands could accomplish more rapidly than another. Her light, patient feet were always ready to run merrily at her mother's call. Shirley soothed the babies and mended their little garments; Shirley weeded the garden and gathered in the vegetables, and she sang about her work like a redbird. She could swim, row a boat and ride a wild colt, and among all the children was none so fleet of foot as she, this strong, bright, happy girl.

"Our Shirley's as good as a boy," said Tom. "She can do everything. There never was a girl like her."

A girl who was as good as a boy for a "pard" and yet could make even boys stand back when she felt like it—here was a superior being, indeed.

How they loved her, father and mother, brothers and sisters. She idolized them too, she reveled in her affections. If whatever she undertook she could accomplish better than other children, so her child friends felt, somehow, that Shirley could love them more than other people could. Her parents knew that Shirley would have gone through fire for them. Hers was a nature of flame and steel and crystal, and yet on one side of it of pearly tenderness and gentleness, too.

An uncommon destiny was predicted for the child. Her remarkable beauty attracted attention from all. To the fine, high bred features, brilliant eyes and straight, black eyebrows, was added a complexion rose tinted and radiant. With every passing emotion the exquisite color came and went in her cheek like the changing light on the burning breast of a dove. The expression of her face was varied as the tints of the many hued sea. But the countenance told always of a soul full of truth and strength, sunny sweetness and singleness of purpose.

All this in a child of 14? Yes, Shirley was not turned out of the common mold. She was as school girls might be, not as they are. Even stolid, average humanity recognized the power and the promise there was in her. Col. Carstone was a man of wealth. His children could have whatever he and the mother thought was good for them. What promise of life could be more rare and radiant than Shirley's?

Only her father saw something that troubled him.

"But I'm afraid for Shirley. She is so easily deceived," he said. "People bear their fate within their own breasts. The child would lie down and make a bridge of herself for those she loved to walk over. She carries predestination of martyrdom within her, somehow."

"Tom, dear, you always did talk a little nonsense, you know," said his wife. "Shirley's the merriest child I ever saw."

"'Fore de Lord," said old Sam, "she's got more sense nor anybody I ever seed, for a gal."

Shirley looked at her father instantly.

"Papa," she asked, "hasn't a girl as much sense as a boy?"

Papa smiled, and did not answer, at first. Then he said:

"Find out for yourself, Shirley."

The question took hold of her. It haunted her thought. She had perceptions underneath the common perceptions. Where other children saw only the substance she unknowingly looked deeper, and saw the spirit.

She read everything she could lay hands on. Her imagination took fire as she read of warriors, heroes and martyrs. The lesson of their mighty deeds sank into the deep child heart, and blossomed in the clear child soul. Her world of fancy was peopled with leaders and princes like Moses, with Cæsars and splendid crusaders like Richard the Lion Heart. Bernard Palissy, defying hunger and want, opposing those whom he held dearest, tearing the very walls from his cabin, sacrificing all to achieve one splendid result—Bernard Palissy was to her the deification of human will. Through the years of approaching womanhood she walked as in a dream—

Nourishing a youth sublime
With the fairy tales of science and the long results of Time.

Most, though, her heart went out to the few women heroes and teachers whose names she met on the page of the world's history—Hypatia, Elizabeth, Zenobia. Her soul was on fire as her eyes bent over the page that told her about Joan of Arc, the inspired maid of Domremy. She, the woman soldier with the iron helmet resting upon her golden hair, with her shining armor and white war horse, was the highest and greatest figure of all to the child Shirley.

Later she read Homer, Milton and Shakespeare, and their stately music rang a rhythm to the beating of her heart. Still, too, and ever through the years of girlhood would come the old question she asked her father that day:

Has a girl as much sense as a boy?

Why was there no woman Homer, no woman Shakespeare or Milton? Then Homer, and Joan of Arc, and Shakespeare, and Richard the Lion Heart mingled together in her dreams, till out of all there stood before her at last a vision of a woman poet who should be. She should be as great as the greatest, a majestic woman, poet, hero and teacher in one. But not a martyr. There were no martyrs in these days. The world had grown too wise and kindly for that.

So she reasoned. At last she awakened once in the summer night suddenly. She saw the stars shining in at the window and heard the wind sighing through the willows down by the mill race. She whispered to herself and said:

"I will be the woman poet. I, myself."

Then the new schoolmaster came.

CHAPTER III.

THE TEACHER.

The lively young man who had taught the Linwood school three winters had accumulated savings enough from this honest industry to begin the study of law. Accordingly, the school was left without a teacher. One day a stranger brought a letter to the Presbyterian minister, applying for the vacant place. After some delay it was given him. He was of slender, though athletic build, with dark hair and dark gray eyes. His face was a fine, strong one, full of will and intelligence; but it was not a peaceful face nor a face at rest.

In the center of the shabby village was the grocery—common club room for the male gossips of the neighborhood. Travelers knew it was the grocery by token that it had a box of blacking and two clothes pins in the window. The stranger teacher had a little room over this shop. He was quite solitary at first. Of evenings he staid alone in this room and played a violin, sometimes far into the night. Of afternoons, after school, he took long walks over the country roads and paths. Rain or shine, it was his habit. Indeed, he rather seemed to enjoy a walk in the rain, against the wind, with the storm beating in his face. He appeared more calm and happy after a five mile tramp in rough weather. At such times the people in the house heard him often singing to himself, in a singularly deep, sweet voice, songs in an unknown tongue. The impression of the stranger's dread and mysterious learning had so deepened in a few months, that the simple country people declared he sang in Hebrew. But a farmer from over seas told them the words were German. It was the folk song of Germany the new teacher sang. Thereupon the grocer, with the air of one announcing a great truth, said:

"He's a Dutchman!"

Once, after a fierce walk, George Morrison, quite exhausted, threw himself full length upon the carpet in his little room, with a pillow under his head. He thought at first to doze, but the stovepipe hole in the floor was a telelephone, bringing unerringly to his sensitive ear every word spoken in the rustic shop below. He knew just how the male gossips were grouped. There was the 'Squire, who sat on a barrel head. There were the shoemaker and the postmaster. There was the lazy grocer himself, who sat upon an upturned empty soap box most of the time and let his wiry little wife wait upon the customers.

At length Jim Sweet said:

"That there new schoolmaster ain't much account, I reckon. He's too darned grammatical."

"I heerd him whip out the Presbyterian preacher in argument t'other day," said the postmaster.

Now Simpkins, the grocer, struck in. He had listened to all the rest first. He had a solemn way of stating a stupid old fact as if it had been a great new truth. He was, therefore, esteemed a man of very profound judgment by everybody but his own wife. She saw through her husband's humbug, as wives, alas! too often do. Simpkins said, solemnly:

"It's my opinion a man that can outargify the Presbyterian minister ain't a safe person to be trusted with the edication of our little ones. It's my opinion, further, that the schoolmaster's got somethin' on his mind. Them close he wears ain't Linwood cut. It's my opinion he's come from somewhere, and come down in the world. It's my opinion"——

"Your opinion, Sim Simpkins!" exclaimed his wiry little partner, contemptuously. "If the schoolmaster's got something on his mind, it'd better be that than not to have any mind at all. They say he's come down in the world, do they? What of it? I've heerd say it was better to be dead lion than a live jackass. Ain't the Carstone children going to school to him, every one of 'em? A man's good enough to teach my children, if he's good enough to teach them. They're a manneredly family, from the oldest to the youngest, that they are!"

But the new master won the hearts of the children right speedily. There were an exquisite patience and kindliness in his ways toward them, as though something had schooled him through years to think of others rather than himself, and those others weak and childish. He had said he was 24 years old, but he looked years older. It was easy to see he had been born in a different sphere from the people he had come among. Even Jim Sweet recognized the fine, high bred ways that separated him from Linwood folk.

But it was true that he had something on his mind. He was unhappy and wretchedly discontented. He had sought Linwood to be out of the world, and, having his wish, he found, as many do, that his wish was just what he did not want. The coarseness, the stolid self conceit, the prying curiosity, the illiteracy of the Linwood people chafed his soul till he was like a tiger behind bars. Oh, what would bring forgetfulness?

He had been in his new employ only two months, yet he had grown weary and reckless. In a week more he would resign his place, he said to himself. In this mood he went to his task one morning. Entering the school house his eye rested on a group of handsome, tastefully dressed children. Next moment he saw that one, a girl, was older and taller than the rest, and his wandering eye was instantly arrested by her remarkable beauty. The group were new pupils. They were the Carstone children, Shirley among them. She lifted her eyes, and a flash of recognition passed between the two souls, the child and the master?

It was a day of beginning in the lives of both.

This story has been very quiet thus far. Storm enough come later.

From that day there was more of peace in the life of George Morrison. This girl pupil understood his plans with an instant, sweet recognition that surprised him. Gradually a better, more refining influence spread over the rude school.

"Papa," said Shirley, "this new teacher has opened a new world for us. Ask him to come to our house."

UNDER THE WILLOWS.

So it came about that the lonely schoolmaster became intimate in the Carstone mansion. The minds of the bright, pretty children unfolded like a flower under his sunlike teaching. Two happy years they were under his instructions. Yet at first he almost broke Shirley's heart by his criticism. The thought of one great poem she was to write had by this time taken possession of her. The master read the clear soul as if it had been the depths of a crystal lake.

"Others have written the epic of battles, Shirley," he said; "let your poem be the epic of peace and progress in history."

When she was 15 she wrote some timid verses for his inspection. He gave them back all marked and erased. He had taken away her finest words, her most sounding passages. Shirley was intensely angry. She flung herself on her father's breast in a passion.

"He crosses out the best of everything I write," she said. "It's no use my trying. I won't go to school any more."

That evening the master came as usual to the stone house. But the brightest, sweetest face of all was not there as usual to greet him.

"Where's Shirley?" asked he.

"You have broken her heart," said the colonel. "You cut her poem all to pieces."

A look of keen annoyance, of pain, crossed the fine dark face.

"But I could not help it," he said. "She uses too many words. Send her to me, will you not?"

The colonel brought her, leading her by the hand, her face averted.

"Here she is, Mr. Morrison," said he. "Take her life, but spare her adjectives!"

He laughed and passed down the steps out of sight. Shirley and the master were left alone. Shirley, strong, fearless girl though she was, trembled from head to foot. She had never been afraid of anything, but here was a new timidity stealing up from her heart and stopping her throat so she could not speak. As for him it may be that he trembled too. He opened his lips to speak.

"Shirley," he said. But the words died. A strange gleam passed over his face. His lips quivered momentarily, but he suppressed some kind of emotion, and said:

"You are my best pupil, Shirley; the one I take most pride in. You are angry at your teacher. What have I done? Have I not always been kind and gentle to you?"

Shirley found a voice, somehow, though it was a voice with a quaver in it.

"Yes, you have, Mr. Morrison. But I will never write anything again. Other girls write poetry for the school exercises. They take it out of books, and change it over so nobody will know it. They hand it to you, and you say it is nice. I write my verses out of my own head. They are my own. And you mark them all over. I have torn the paper up. I will never write any more. Never!"

"Just because it was your own and I saw rare promise in it, therefore I took pains to show you its faults. You use too much ornamentation. You imitate, without knowing it, other poets you have read. You must learn to be yourself. Come here, Shirley."

She obeyed, with downcast face.

"My dear pupil, I would rather go away from Linwood altogether than to hurt you or offend you. But I am your teacher. Don't you think, child, I know better than you?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Morrison, I know that. You have taught me about more things than I ever knew in the world. I owe everything to you."

And you will trust me for the future, will you not?" he said.

He put one strong hand softly against each pink cheek and lifted her face. He looked down at her with his black-gray eyes, eyes so like her own, and said:

"Dear girl, you do not know how much you have been to me. I hated mankind when I came here. There was not a living creature I cared for, or who cared for me. You and your father showed me there was still truth and honest feeling in the world, bless your sweet, sunny soul! When I go away, whatever trouble is still to come, I shall know I have had some true friends, some hours that were happy. You are the best, truest, brightest creature I ever met. Would I wound your tender soul by so much as a word, do you think? You are the only one—Shirley, you are capable of great things. If I can judge of anything, the time will come when all the world will praise you. You will write your poem, and do your work—a work such as no woman ever did before. I know that. You will show all men the sweet, deep, marvelous strength that lies in a woman's brain. I believe in that, and I believe in you. Your verses will not be feeble and muddy and narrow—the kind most women write. Yours will be the grand, ringing lines of humanity and free womanhood. Because I know this, let me give you such hints as I may, child. Will you do this and forgive me?"

Her lips quivered, but she was always ready to confess an error—the frank, true child. She said:

"You are very, very good, Mr. Morrison; and I was wrong and foolish. I will do my best and never give you trouble again. Forgive me, dear master."

"I will bring you a woman's poem and read it to you to-morrow, Shirley," he said. "Gather your little Carstones, and we shall have a picnic in the afternoon down under the willows by the mill race. I will read you Aurora Leigh. Good night, child."

He laid his hand caressingly upon her head and slid it down softly over one of the fair braids. Did he press the long, fair braid to his lips as he turned to go? Well, who knows? Shirley did not know.

It was their last quarrel.

From that day a new and tenderer tie seemed to draw them together. The picnics, as the children called them, lasted all through the bright summer days. In the winter there were picnics indoors. The teacher had seemed soured and reserved when he came to Linwood. He had a bitter, sarcastic tongue when disturbed, which had drawn on him ill-will at first. But that had changed. He had become gentle and genial. He established a literary society among the rustics, the first one ever in the village. It was turning the thoughts of the younger people in a better and higher direction.

He and Shirley read and studied history, poetry and science. He taught her Greek and Latin, prose and poetry. The girl, like himself, had the rare faculty of grasping a thought in a glance. A few words upon its page would tell its whole story to her clear, alert brain. They were days of perfect happiness and peace. But the girl's thoughts came back always to Joan of Arc, the Maid of Domremy, the saint and martyr, with the iron helmet pressing upon her golden hair. It was like the motive in a work of music. She wrote little poems still, but now the master criticised them no more. Some had been printed. They had been copied and recopied, and went floating through the newspapers like beautiful waifs. Shirley was beginning to be known already as a poet of no common order.

"Shirley, you must write the best poem of your life for us next month," said the president of the literary society. "It is our last meeting of the year; you are appointed for the poem for the public entertainment. Our literary society has such a name now that we must do something uncommon."

"Yes," said the executive committeeman, "spectators will come in from half the county. Linwood must keep up her reputation. Linwood forever!"

The evening came, and Shirley read her poem. She surpassed all former efforts. Beside her, as she read, was a vase of white rosebuds, rare and costly, of a kind unknown in Linwood. It was the master's gift to his best pupil.

Mrs. Simpkins, her fast friend, told the story of her triumph to every stranger that came to the village.

"'Twas a night Linwood'll never forget, I reckon. The master, he'd trained Shirley, and practiced her on her readin' till it was thus natural you couldn't ha' told she wasn't talkin' it off out of her own head. She was the beautifulest creetur' you ever laid eyes on. She looked for all the world like an angel, standin' there dressed in snow white 'lusion. And her speech! Land's sake! It sounded like the organ playin' 'Gather at the River,' when Sunday school lets out. It was just that beautiful. When she got done, and made her bow, there was a minit of dead hush, like before the benediction in church. Then the people all fell to as they couldn't help themselves, and such a clappin' and cheerin' was never heerd in Linwood before nor since. 'Peared as though they would take the girl and carry her off on their hands then and there. Shirley, she just blushed and looked that pretty till you felt you'd like to bite her. She turned her eyes this way and that, as if she'd like to hide, till her eyes lit on the master. He was sitting on the stage, with the Presbyterian minister and the doctor. He hadn't cheered her at all, but looked sober and set right still. But when Shirley looked at him, with the crowd a clappin' and a clappin', he jest reached across and shook her hand, quiet and gentleman like. He was a little pale and serious, like he had a pain or something. You could see how pleased he was, though, with his eyes a shinin'. But he never said a word.

"When the noise died away a little the Presbyterian minister he got up and waved his hand for 'em to be still. Then he says:

"'Ladies and gentlemen—I am requested by the Linwood Literary society to close the exercises of the evenin' by a little ceremony not down in the regyler programme. A little surprise has been prepared for the poet of the evenin', a young lady whom we all honor. On behalf of the Linwood Literary society, as a token of their high appreciation, I am requested to present this wreath of silver laurel leaves to Miss Shirley Carstone. Fame may wreathe her brow with evergreens in after years, but she will never forget the inscription here, 'Linwood crowns her poet.'" "It said just that:

"'Linwood crowns her poet.'

"Then you ought to have heerd the noise! It was wuss'n a revival meetin'."

But there was something good Mrs. Simpkins did not tell. She did not tell it because she did not know it. Women generally keep a secret under similar circumstances.

When Shirley, half in a dream, looked at her crown and her flowers that night at home, she found a little card among the white rose buds. The card said:

"The master learns from his pupil."

CHAPTER IV.

MATRIMONIAL.

The scene changes. We are across the sea. But it is still a school. Are we never to be done with schools? Well, no! Life is a school, and the wise are never done learning.

The scene, by your leave, is a German university town. Time, several years before the opening of the humble tale you have done us the honor to follow thus far. On a giant cliff above the town stands the most magnificent ruin in Europe. Below, the blue Neckar rushes out from its mountains and seeks the great Rhine beyond. You know the town, Heidelberg.

An American family were spending some months there. With them was the pretty daughter of the household, a girl of 17. Among the students at that time was a young man from the United States. He was barely 18, but large, strong and manly in physique, with dark hair and eyes. He was precocious in every way; noted for his wide range of study, as well as for his strength and courage. He was, besides, the son of rich parents, who had indulged his every whim from the time he was born. In brief he was a fiery youth, who knew no law but his own will.

Hundreds of parents from the United States visit the old German town every year with their young lady daughters. The university dates back to the year of our Lord 1386. It is very famous. Hundreds of American boys attend its classes every year. But this particular boy, with the flashing dark eyes, who loved his own way, met the particular maiden of 17 one day at the Hotel Victoria. With the other hundreds we have nothing to do.

Fate willed the meeting. The dark haired youth mostly decided what followed, the first part of it at any rate.

The girl was a giggling, weak willed creature, with poodle dog eyes and forehead, and a doll's red and white face. She had the simpering, affected ways of a school girl, who cannot for one moment get rid of the consciousness of her sex. The dark haired boy's room mate fancied himself madly in love with her. His friend saw it with regret.

"I'll cure you of this nonsense, Frank Broughton," he said to himself. "I'll go and make love to Miss Myra myself. I'll cut you out. The girl will throw you over. Then I'll throw her over and go home for the summer, and you go with me. You'll thank me for breaking you of this blessed foolishness."

That evening, with his graceful, careless bow and smile—the scapegrace was fascinating—the dark haired youth made his way to the young lady:

"Miss Myra," he said, "it will be a beautiful sunset. Will you and your mother give me the pleasure of going up the mountain with you?"

The red and white girl simpered.

"Why la! mamma," said she, "shall we go?"

Mamma said, "I think we may," with that degree of alacrity, veneered by dignified reserve, which is due of an occasion when a managing mamma scents a possible son-in-law in a rich and highly connected young man.

It quite took away the breath of Frank Broughton. In five minutes they were off, before his very eyes.

If, reader, you are of a guessing turn, you will know the rest. Well, the girl was pretty, with her peach like cheeks, and her eyes of that color which the milliners call "peacock blue." The dark haired youth, who went in for cutting his friend out to save him from folly, was himself of a passionate, susceptible nature. The walks and rides up the mountain were finally continued on his own account.

What would you have? A month later the same three went up the mountain. Mamma discreetly lingered in the shadow, in the great square of the magnificent ruin. In the shadow in the smaller square at the front of the magnificent ruin, the dark haired youth who had his own way, pressed Miss Myra's babylike hand, kissed her on her babylike lips and whispered in her babylike ear:

"In a month I'm coming home to marry you."

"And Miss Myra blushed and said:

"Why, la, how could you?"

That was the very question he asked himself many a time afterward. Frank Broughton was avenged!

In a month they were married, the boy and girl. The youth's parents opposed feebly, but Philip Dumoray had always had his own way. Miss Myra's mother helped on the match in all the haste consistent with regard to the best appearances. Had she not been an American mother of the highest standing it might have even seemed that she feared the prize would slip through her fingers.

The young people set up housekeeping in New York. Twin sons were born to them within a year. Then it was that Philip Dumoray faced the great new truth, that a man who has a mother-in-law, a dull, silly wife and a pair of babies can't always have his own way. What could even thunder and lightning do against a hill of putty?

Myra Dumoray developed such astounding capacity for emotion that Philip could scarcely believe his own senses. Strange, too, but the emotion was always of a disagreeable kind. Scenes began to take place that thoroughly alarmed the youthful husband, and then thoroughly enraged him. His household was comfortless. It was something new not to be comfortable. Matters went from bad to worse between them. Once he had said impatiently:

"What in thunder is this mess cook's brought in? Do you call that coffee, Myra? I wonder why you never have anything fit to eat in the house?"

Perhaps, like a man, this strong young fellow would not have noticed that other things were so slouchy, if the household had happened to have a good cook. But the tender point of the masculine gender is its stomach.

"When you married me, who'd a thought you'd ever been so cross. You would marry me. And now you're always grumbling, and me not at all well! Boo-hoo-hoo!" remarks Mrs. Dumoray.

He pushed back from the table and strode out of the room. Myra sent for mamma. They counseled together. When the male monster returned both women wore an air of martyrlike resignation that exasperated him beyond measure.

It went on so for days and months. What might have been expected from the self will and undisciplined temper of Philip Dumoray? He was moody and half savage at home. Myra would shut herself up and sulk and cry for hours. Mamma was there to protect her darling, and perhaps it was well she was, at times. Philip was sincerely fond of his little boys. That much at least is to be said for him. He amused himself and them every day. One afternoon he missed them.

"Where are the babies, Myra?" he asked his wife.

"Oh, I sent them away to spend a month at nurse's mother's in the country. I'm not well and they made me nervous."

"Why, woman, what are you thinking of? Have you no natural feelings toward your own children?"

Philip's mother had never let him out of her sight in his childhood, so rare and precious had she held him.

Myra put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"I never thought I'd live to be insulted in this way. And you would marry me, you know!"

"I didn't know I was marrying a fool," muttered Philip, savagely.

"Mamma! mamma!" shrieked Mrs. Dumoray, and fell back in a hysterical fit. Mamma came, murmuring, "Oh, my poor, poor darling!" Once more the man had to beat a retreat. The moment he was out of the house the abused wife dried her eyes and sat bolt upright. Philip wandered aimlessly to the park and sat down, restless and discontented. Was all married people's life like this? But he had had his own way, to be sure. His marriage had been one of those cases wherein all a man's best friends can do is to stand