

ceived a somewhat stout, middle aged gentleman, who was leaning against one of the columns of the veranda, quietly enjoying his evening smoke.

As I approached, feeling somewhat uncomfortable at thus appearing, an unbidden and, it might be, an unwelcome guest, he removed the pipe from his lips and stood with a sort of surprised and enquiring gaze. Walking up in front of him, I enquired if Squire Graham lived there. As I expected, he replied that that was his name, whereupon I took from my pocket-book my brother's letter and, after handing it to him, I stood anxiously awaiting the effect it might produce.

After glancing briefly over the letter, the Squire grasped me cordially by the hand, in such a manner as to shake my late unpleasant feelings completely out of me. Then, taking up my valise, he led the way into the house and conducted me into a handsomely furnished parlour, at the same time expressing his regret at the absence of his wife and daughter, who were off on a visit to a neighbouring family, and would not return until late in the evening.

"So you see," he added, "we must endeavour to make ourselves as comfortable as possible under the circumstances."

And we did make ourselves comfortable. After a quiet little chat of half an hour or so, we left the room on a foraging tour to the kitchen, where we discovered a cold fowl and some other little etceteras, which afforded us an excellent supper, to which I, at least, did ample justice. Then, the rest of the evening was occupied in smoking and the discussion of a wonderful variety of subjects, and about ten o'clock my kind host showed me to my room and bid me good night, and in fifteen minutes more I was sleeping as soundly as if I was in my own room at the hotel in the city.

When I awoke next morning, the early rays of the rising sun were just beginning to make visible the surrounding objects. I lay awake, turning over in my mind the events of the preceding day, until I heard a clock striking six, and then hopped out of bed and prepared to arrange my morning toilet.

Just as I had finished dressing, some one rapped at the door, and on opening it, I found the Squire standing outside.

"I heard you stirring about," he explained, "and thought I would ask you to take an early stroll until breakfast time, just to whet up our appetites a bit you know."

To this I readily agreed, and we sallied forth together to get a breath of the morning air.

The position of Rosemount was picturesque and beautiful in the extreme; situated on a portion of high land, it afforded a most charming view of a wide expanse of luxuriant meadow and magnificent forest. The grounds in the vicinity of the house were laid out with great skill and care, and altogether the scene was one of surpassing beauty.

After an hour had been spent in surveying the splendors of the natural panorama, which

lay before and around us, we turned and retraced our steps to the house.

At the breakfast table I was introduced to the worthy Squire's wife and daughter. The former was a fine sprightly lady with perfect good-nature beaming in every feature, and whose cheery smile, as well as her words, bespoke me a hearty welcome; the latter, Miss Alice Graham, was, without doubt, the most perfect specimen of feminine beauty that I have ever laid my eyes upon: a complexion of pure white and pink; eyes of heavenly blue; a tiny mouth whose rosy lips, when parted, revealed a double row of pearly teeth; bright flaxen hair, which hung in dancing ringlets about her neck and shoulders, and a figure of exquisite symmetry, all combined to produce a face and form such as might move to envy the fairest of our haughty city belles.

After breakfast, the Squire informed us that some business, of a legal character, would require him to proceed to the Shiretown, some miles distant, and very probably he would not return until late in the evening, and suggested that I might pass the forenoon very pleasantly by walking out with the ladies.

They having no objection to the arrangement, we set out at once, and a most pleasant time we had. I was as much delighted with my company as with the beauties of the landscape. Mrs. Graham was a woman of more than ordinary intelligence and culture, whose conversation and manner displayed such courtesy and affability of disposition, as enabled any one, even an utter stranger, to feel perfectly at ease in her presence.

Alice Graham possessed many of the excellent qualities of her mother. Her's was a happy, loving, trusting nature; her deportment was easy, graceful and without affectation; her language was simple yet elegant, and, in a word, she was one fitted to fill and adorn any position in society, however high and exalted.

Very quickly and pleasantly did the hours slip away that morning, as we rambled over the beautiful grounds of Rosemount; and by the time we had pretty well "done" the place, and were recalled to the house by a shrill blast of the dinner-horn, I felt as much at home with my kind hostess and her gentle daughter, as though I had known them long before, and not as if I had made their acquaintance, for the first time, but a few hours previously.

In the absence of the Squire, I consented to undertake the carving operations at dinner, but, owing to lack of skill and experience in the art, I only succeeded in hacking a few misshapen fragments from the joint, spattering the gravy over the snowy table-cloth, and getting very warm and red in the face. These little drawbacks, however, we did not allow to lessen the enjoyment of the occasion, and ample justice was done to the excellent viands which were set before us.

When we arose from the table, Alice invited me to accompany her into her flower garden which I had not yet seen. Of course I went.