A GREAT MISTAKE.

CHAPTER IX.

On Sunday a great many eyes were turned toward the Throgmorton's pew at St. Chad's; but only the familiar figures of the family were to be seen.

As Doctor March came in, his face wearing its usual Sunday morning tranquility, Bee was puzzled and angry too, to find that her cheeks began to burn and her heart to throb; and she was conscious that, for some reason or another, she rather avoided than sought the swift glance of recognition she was in the habit of exchanging with her old friend across the sea of close cropped masculine heads and smart bonnets that divided them.

The girl felt almost frightened at the change produced in her by a few careless words from a stranger.

All her life, it seemed to her, she had known and liked George March with something of the feeling she had for her own brothers. Ever since she could remember him, George had petted and scolded her, treating her like a favorite sister; and she had been so happy that it had never occurred to her to question the quality or degree of her regard for him. But now—

Some new and painful feeling had been stirring within her ever since the confidential chat in Miss Ludlow's bedchamber. Such talk of men and marriage and incomes had hitherto been unknown to Mary Throgmorton's simple-minded daughter; it seemed somehow to have left a bitter taste in her mouth. She had never dreamt of George March marrying anybody; and now she had suddenly become conscious that the thought of such a thing, the bare possibility of Ada Ludlow's suggestion coming true was hateful to her.

"What is the matter with me?" she wondered, trembling, as the solemn opening words of the Litany brought her wandering thoughts back. "I—I wish Ada had not spoken so of him. She is so fair and delicate and sweet—will he admire her very much? Oh, why shouldn't he, and why do I think of such things at all, and in church?"

And bowing her face, grave with its new trouble, in her hands, the girl joined in the echoing of supplications, with perhaps a little more than her usual earnestness.

In the porch when the service was over, Doctor March waited to speak to his friends.

"You are coming over to luncheon, George, of course?" said Mrs. Throgmorton. "Bee and Jack are going across first to the King's Road to inquire after Mrs. Ludlow. Ada was not able to leave her, I see, this morning."

George declared that he must say No to luncheon, though he would try, later on, to find time for a cigarette.

"May I, mademoiselle?" he demanded, turning to Bee, who was hovering a little aloof; and Bee, starting as he addressed her, and changing color, declared a little nervously that his manners were improving, and that, as he had been so very good, he might.

Feminine Barlaston in general felt itself aggrieved by the absence of Miss Ludlow from church.

It was already understood by Mrs. Throgmorton's friends that the widow's delicate health would compel her to live in almost complete retirement, an hour's drive in the morning sunshine, or a chat with her old friend on her sofa, being all the exertion she was able to undergo.

But the little air of seclusion and mystery which this threw over the family had the effect of piquing many of the young ladies who had been fluttered by the advent in their midst of a London girl and who seemed to take it for granted that gentle Miss Ludlow's intentions were of a predatory nature.

And now another week must in all probability elapse before it could be decided whether the young lady was likely to prove a formidable rival to Miss Tulkinghorn, who was considered the best dressed girl in Barlaston, or to Minnie Bryer, who was pretty in a full blown pink and white way, and had been christened Sweet Brier by the young men, to distinguish her from her sister Janet, who was less good looking and considered witty by her family.

Doctor March met the Bryers on his way home from church, or rather was overtaken by these young ladies and their brother. Few people indeed could evade the thorny Miss Bryer when she had made up her mind to attack them, and George submitted with a decent grace to the inevitable.

Miss Bryer had only wished to ask, she declared—and it was useless to appeal to the Throgmortons, they were all so infatuated with their new friends—whether the daughter of a London bankrupt—she begged pardon—banker, was very different from other girls, and whether Barlaston Regis was likely to be dazzled when Miss Ludlow did make up her mind to rise above their provincial horizon?

"Oh, Janet, how can you be so severe?" cried the pretty sister, blushing at Doctor March and dropping her eyes.

"Miss Ludlow has an uncommonly pretty sister," declared Edgar Bryer competently. He was a florid handsome lad, looking exactly like Miss Minnie in coat and trousers.

"A cousion, I believe," corrected the Doctor.

"Really, Edgar, what can you know about Miss Thrale," snapped Janet.

"Saw her at the station," said Edgar, with a knowing look. "She's a jolly girl. Miss Ludlow is too pale, don't you know—not the sort a fellow could feel spoony about."

"Miss Ludlow grows more interesting every moment," said George March drily. "But I advise you, Edgar, to leave both young ladies out of your conversation for the future."

"For my part," declared Minnie, "after what Bee has told us, I am dreadfully jealous of Miss Ludlow already."

With which naive confession Miss Minnie raised her china blue orbs to Doctor March's face, and dimpled into a smile of complete self satisfaction.

"Why do good little books try to persuade us that jealousy is unbecoming in a woman?" cried the Doctor.

Minnie blushed again—a genuine blush this time—with pleasure; Janet's ugly sidelong curl of the lip looked uglier than ever.

"I thought you never paid compliments, Doctor March," she exclaimed scornfully.

"Only when the habit of receiving them has become hopelessly confirmed," was George's reply, given with the gravest of bows.

"Oh, really, Doctor, what do you mean?" cried Miss Minnie, pouting.

Doctor March did not wait to explain. He thought as he hurried away that the ways of women were inscrutable, and wondered why all these nice girls should be so ready to sneer at poor Miss Ludlow, and to be jealous of her before they had ever set eyes upon her, because she happened to be a stranger and to have lived in London.

And in this manner the young man's sympathies, always on the side of the weakest were arroused on Miss Ludlow's behalf before they met.

"The world seems to be down on the poor little soul somehow!" he thought, good-naturedly. "First the coquettish cousin and her wiles, and now all Barlaston in petticoats ready to crush Miss Ludlow if she should venture or trespass on their preserves! Let us hope the poor little woman will hold her own against them."

He did not smoke his cigarette that afternoon in Upper Brunswick Street. It was nearly a week indeed before he found time for his pleasant half hour there, by which time Mrs. Throgmorton was beginning to believe that there was a fate against the meeting which she was so anxious to bring about. For a little dinner, which had been given during the week for that express purpose, had failed of its object, seeing that, though Doctor March had duly put in an appearance, Miss Ludlow had been prevented from coming at the last moment by some anxiety on her mother's account.

"I have a good mind not speak to you," Mrs. Throgmorton said, when George at last showed his dark face at the door of the old schoolroom. "I consider that you have treated us very badly of late."

But all the same Bee, who had been lounging on a great chintz covered sofa near the hearth, stood up, smiling rather languidly, to wheel forward a chair for him; when Desdemona leaped down from Mrs. Throgmorton's lap to run and rub her white head affectionately against the young man's knee.

It was a blustering and chilly evening. The bank of ferns had disappeared from the great tiled fireplace and big brass dogs, on which burned a talkative sparkling wood fire, had taken its place.

"What a jolly old room this is!" cried George for the thousand and first time. He looked round him with lazy enjoyment as he stood with his back to the blaze, very blown about and dusty, and with the air of having thoroughly earned a rest. "Don't scold me here, dear Mrs. Throgmorton. I came here for peace—when Miss Bee chooses that I shall get it, of course, I mean."

Bee smiled again. But she had no answer ready.

"One would think you and—and the Ludlows had made up your minds to avoid each other," protested Mary Throgmorton, laughing, but provoked. "When are you going to have done being busy, George? You work altogether too hard. Mr. Stetson does not do his share."

George smiled, and stooped down to pull Othello's black ears.

"I believe I should have sent for you today if you had not come," his friend went on reproachfully. "I am sure Bee is not herself at all though she won't admit it."

"There is nothing to admit!" cried Bee, with a nervous laugh, jumping up from the sofa. "I am only lazy, you dear anxious old mother!"

"A new compliment for Queen Bee certainly," said the Doctor good naturedly. "Been sitting over the fire all day, I suppose, and crying over a novel."

"No, indeed," protested Bee, edging away into a shady corner of the hearth and sitting down on a stool, with her head against the wainscot.

"She has been spending the morning in King's Road with Ada Ludlow," explained her mother. "What a dear good girl that is, Doctor! I expect that you and she will be great friends. She is so sensible."

"And Bee and Miss Ludlow have sworn eternal friendship already, of course?"

"Of course," echoed Bee somewhat sarcastically.

"And the naughty cousin? Is she pretty enough to justify Lord Meldrum's bad behaviour?"

"I have hardly seen Miss Thrale," returned Mrs. Throgmorton coldly. "I have no desire whatever to make that young lady's acquaintance. But as for Ada—well, wait until you see her. I can assure you we are all head over ears in love with her already. Are we not, Bee?"

"Yes, mother," returned Bee quietly out of her dark corner.

Doctor March turned and looked at her suddenly, but her face was quite in shadow.

"Bee," he said, "I have had a hard day's work, and I am longing for a little indulgence. Am I to make my own cigarette after months of anxious labor devoted to your instruction in the art?"

"I told you I was lazy," she answered, laughing. "If you will bring it to me here, perhaps——"

"Nothing of the kind, madam. You are not treating me with the deference due to my superior age—besides, you have no right over there."

Bee stood up without another word, and went to the gipsy table, which her mother had drawn to the fire for her wools, and by which George was sitting in his low chair, leaning forward, elbows on knees, as he selected the paper from his cigarette case.

Mrs. Throgmorton looked up with fond anxious eyes at her tall girl, and patted the little feverish hand Bee laid on her shoulder.

"Do you think she looks like herself, Doctor?" she asked.

"Let me see."

As Bee held out her other hand for the materials of her cigarette, George took it with a little affection of professional severity and began to feel her pulse.

But Bee snatched it away, laughing, and declared that she would not be coddled.

"That is for your mother to say," returned the young man cooly; and he stood up and put his hands lightly on the girl's shoulders, turning her face round to the lamp.

The blood mounted to Bee's cheeks, but she stood quite still.

"Look at me," George added, in his imperative kindly way; and obediently she lifted her brown eyes to his.

He saw they were full of tears; the hand he held was burning; he could hear her heart beating loud and fast under its pretty crimson gown.

"Hem!"—releasing her. "That will do, Miss Throgmorton."

Bee turned and fled from the room, at which her mother looked alarmed. She would have followed the girl, but George held her back.

"There is nothing the matter," he said reassuringly. "Better leave her to herself!"

And so the two friends fell into a pleasant chat about many things, in the course of which however it seemed inevitable that Miss Ludlow's name should crop up in all sorts of unexpected places. Her patience, her devotion to her mother, her lovely flaxen hair, her embroidery, her goodness to that deceitful girl Lucy Thrale—on these and many other charms in her protege Mrs. Throgmorton never seemed weary of dilating.

"Now, George," she concluded, "promise me to come and meet her some day next week. I really want you to know her."

George gave the required promise with encouraging alacrity; his cigarette was smoked; it was time for him to be going home.

"It is amusing to hear Jack rave about her," the kind woman added. "I don't know that Ada is exactly pretty, but she seems different from other girls—the sort of a girl you could write a story about. I hope Bee and she are going to be very good friends, and then naturally you will see a good deal of her, Doctor."

"But you won't ask me to write the story?" said George, smiling, "I shall expect to find Bee as impertinent as ever to-morrow," he added, pausing as he reached the door. "If she is not, tell her that I shall certainly prescribe for her—something horrible, in large doses!"

As the young man crossed the square old fashioned hall, Bee was coming down stairs to remind her mother how late it was. She was dressed for dinner in a pretty white gown, relieved with carnation knots, that made her paleness still more remarkable. She started as she saw Doctor March, and was about to turn back; and now her cheeks were as red as the ribbons on her dress.

"Don't run away, Bee," he said, kindly. "You are not going to quarrel with me surely because I felt your pulse?"

"Of course not," she answered with a cold smile; "though I believe we have often fallen out for less."

"But we always made it up again."

"So we have now," she declared, still hovering aloof on the old oak staircase.

"Are you sure?" asked George in his pleasant voice. "Or don't you mean to fight any more battles with me now that you have found such an excellent substitute for your old friend in Miss Ludlow?"

"You must not laugh at Miss Ludlow," returned the girl coldly; "she is not like us Barlaston girls."

"I am very sorry for Miss Ludlow then," heartily.

"I mean that she will be able to keep you in order. You will not have all the bullying to yourself now."

"Then, while a vestige of authority remains to me," cried the Doctor, "I desire you to get out of this draughty hall. Good night."

"Good night," returned Bee, nodding in her white gown from the dark old staircase.

"Yes, but come down and shake hands with me," urged the young man.

She hesitated.

"My intentions are strictly non-professional," he declared, laughing. And then Bee did come down and gave him her little hot hand.

George March squeezed it with a brotherly cordiality.

"Good-bye," he said again. "Don't let Miss Ludlow banish me altogether from the brown room."

"The brown room has a welcome for you as long as you care to claim it," she answered, meeting the young man's glance with troubled eyes.

"And that will be as long as its blessed old walls are standing. Good night once more, child. Don't stay any longer in this draught."

"It strikes me forcibly," thought Doctor March, as he walked home through the blustering October wind, "that my dear old Bee is beginning to be softened at last by the contemplation of Ted Ackroyd's lamentable condition. How these children are springing up, to be sure! It seems only the other day that Bee was in short frocks, with her hair down her back. I must be getting an awfully old fellow, now I come to think of it. Well, if Ted were not such a good lad, I should forbid the banns. But I believe he does know the worth of that foolish little heart which he has set beating at such a tremendous rate. Young madam! She has led the boy a pretty dance this year and more. It is high time she thought of surrendering at discretion."

CHAPTER X.

The day of Mrs. Throgmorton's little dinner was one of extreme excitement for poor Mrs Ludlow. A certain dream which she had indulged in before her arrival in Barlaston about "Mary's Boy" had been dispelled by the facts of William Throgmorton's marriage and of Jack's youth and unsettled condition; but her old friend, becoming a little indiscreet in her kindly eagerness for Ada's settlement in life, had hinted in confidential moments at the plan which she had formed to that end, and so contrived to interest the widow in the first meeting between Miss Ludlow and Doctor March as much as she was interested in it herself.

There was no talk of Lucy accompanying her cousin, though Ada had pleaded very earnestly that she should hardly hope to enjoy any pleasure from which poor Lucy was excluded. Indeed she had before this tried more than once to urge her cousin's cause with Mrs. Throgmorton, but absolutely without effect, that kindly, but prejudiced, woman being resolved to ignore Miss Thrale's existence.

"I declare I feel ashamed of my own bitterness," she cried, "when I see your angelic patience and forgiving disposition! But it is time somebody considered you, my love. So much confinement to a close room will lay you up as well as your mother."

"I cannot leave mamma alone, dear Mrs. Throgmorton!" Ada exclaimed gently. "If one of those fainting fits were to occur——"

"All the more reason why Miss Thrale should stay at home, and let you have a little enjoyment for once."

"You are so good, dear Mrs. Throgmorton; but—"

"We shall be quite alone," the lady went on "except for George March, who does not count. I want Ada to feel, Letitia, that in coming to us she is not dining out at all, but just making one of the family."

"You are determined to tempt me," said Ada, smiling, but still shaking her head.

"And Ted Ackroyd is dying to see you too."

"Mr. Ackroyd will dine with you—this evening?"

"Oh, Ted comes in and out just as he pleases, my love! He does not count either. I told Jack to give him a hint that we should have a new attraction this evening; so you cannot have the heart to disappoint us all."

And then at last, reluctantly, Miss Ludlow did consent.

"Be sure and look pretty," Mrs. Throgmorton whispered, nodding and smiling as she took her leave. "You must show Mr. Throgmorton that I have not been too warm in my praises of my little new daughter."

Notwithstanding the assurance that it was to be strictly a family gathering, poor Mrs Ludlow was in a fever of excitement all the afternoon as to what her daughter ought to wear.

"It is only my debut in Barlaston, mamma," Ada suggested, with gentle derision. "I have already been presented at Court."

Mrs. Ludlow was unconscious of the little sarcasm; she was too intent on the subject in hand. Even Lucy was pressed into the service; and entering eagerly into her aunt's feelings, she ran up and down stairs cheerfully twenty times with various relics of Ada's London wardrobe, which were to undergo inspection in the front drawing-room.

"I think you must let me wear my black silk gown, mamma," Miss Ludlow said at last, when for nearly an hour she had patiently parried her mother's suggestions. "If I bloom out too gorgeously at a quiet family dinner, I shall have nothing left wherewith to astonish the natives later on."

"Everybody wears black silk," objected the widow, anxiously.

"But every one in Barlaston does not wear a black silk gown from Worth. Mine is square cut, you remember, mamma, and has elbow-sleeves of black lace."

"Your arms are lovely!" admitted the mother fondly. "But first impressions are everything; and you look as well in white."

"Doctor March's first impressions cannot be a matter of great importance, mamma"—with a faint smile. "Let us hope he will be sufficiently grateful for my lace sleeves. I feel that even they are a concession."

So Mrs. Ludlow was silenced, if not convinced; and Lucy helped her cousin to dress and sewed fresh white pleatings into her long skirt, and brushed and braided Ada's abundant flaxen hair—as willing and clever a little lady's maid as any in the kingdom.

She was considerably excited about the mild festivity over which Miss Ludlow sighed as a melancholy necessity.

"It is for mamma's sake," she exclaimed to Lucy, as she kissed her for her services. "They have been so kind to her, and I am sure neither you nor I shrink from such small sacrifices of our own inclination when they are made for our dear sufferer!"

"I hope you will have a very pleasant evening," said Lucy cheerfully, smothering a little wistful sigh as she helped her cousin on with her long fur lined silk cloak. "You will tell me all about it, won't you, when you come home?"

Mrs. Throgmorton's carriage had been sent for Miss Ludlow, and Lucy stood at the door nodding and smiling, until the green gate closed behind the fairy chariot and its plump bay horses. One long look she gave then into the purple star strewn sky, one long breath she drew of the sweet sharp air, and then she went back with a bright face to Mrs. Ludlow.

The little drawing room was somewhat close and overheated for Lucy's young blood, but she did not think so. She patiently did her best to fill Ada's place beside the invalid's sofa, but it was no easy task, as it seemed, and all her simple wiles were wasted. Mrs Ludlow always went to bed very early however; and, when Lucy had helped her aunt to undress, and had read her to sleep, she was free to go down stairs and spend the rest of the evening as she pleased.

The house was very silent; she could hear Susan singing to herself in the kitchen, and she opened the door and peeped in.

Susan was trimming a bonnet at her little round table, and stood up, respectfully brightening and curtseying as the pretty chestnut head was popped in at the door.

Miss Ludlow was always ready with a kind word for a poor girl, as Susan allowed, and never gave unnecessary trouble; but Miss Lucy was not satisfied with words, and would do the rosy little maid many a small kindness—a fact which had at first surprised and rather startled Susan.

She was still uncertain whether she should not lose her place, and be disgraced for ever in Mrs. Ackroyd's eyes, if it were known that she had allowed Miss Lucy to cut out her new print dress, and to lend her books, and even to carry her a share of the hot house fruit which was so liberally supplied to the small household by Mrs. Throgmorton.

But all this was done so simply, and Miss Thrale maintained throughout her kindly intercourse with the little maid, such a strictly impassable barrier of pretty girlish dignity, that Susan could not resist her influence; and, lonely as poor Lucy was, she had made for herself one devoted slave, who would have walked miles to serve her, and counted herself well paid with a smile and a "Thank you, Susan," in the fresh young voice that was ringing all day long up and down the quiet house.

Miss Lucy was shaking her head now over the bonnet.

"That bow is too big, Susan," she said. "It would look much neater with only one flower—that little pink rose you have there. Let me show you."

In a few minutes she had pinned the trimmings on to Susan's admiration; and then, holding the bonnet on one hand, she stood at at a little distance, so that its future wearer might judge of the effect.

"Lor, Miss Lucy, it do look sweet—and thank you kindly," said simple Susan, bobbing her village school curtsey.

"It was too much of a flower garden before," returned Miss Lucy, nodding brightly. "Mind, the ribbon is only pinned on. You had better stitch it before it all comes to pieces."

"Thank you, miss," said Susan again; and Lucy, wishing her good night, added that she need not sit up for Miss Ludlow.

"I am not a bit sleepy," she explained; "and you have to be down early in the morning."

Just then there was a modest knock at the kitchen door, and Susan, going to open it, admitted a certain humble retainer of the villa, a poor woman whom Miss Thrale had seen once or twice before about the house, and who came in dropping a meek obeisance to the young lady.

"Good evening, Mrs. Allen," said Lucy in her pretty way. "Sit down; you look tired, and I am going away." As she spoke her eye fell on a bit of black ribbon which the poor creature wore on her weather beaten bonnet. "I am sorry if you are in trouble," she added gently. "Would you mind telling me what is the matter?"

At the tone of the girl's voice, more than at the words themselves, poor Mrs. Allen burst into a bitter fit of sobs and tears, rocking herself in her chair and uttering many inarticulate moans and excuses.

It was some minutes before she was able to explain herself; and then Lucy heard, with blanching cheeks and wide open horrified eyes, that she was in mourning for her youngest child, who, during his mother's absence from home at her work, had met with a terrible accident, and been found by her, burnt past all recognition, on her return.

The tears were rolling down Lucy's cheeks

"Was there no one with him at all?" she asked faintly.

"No, miss. The lads went out to play and turned the key on him to keep him from falling down the stairs; but they didn't think to put the matches out of his way. Tommy is but eight himself, miss—my eldest."

"Oh, poor little creature—how awful!" Lucy sobbed.

"The funeral was to-day, miss," explained Mrs. Allen, drying her poor reddened eyes with a corner of her shawl. "I hope ther was no offense in my stopping away?"

"Offense! No indeed," cried Lucy indignantly. "What did it matter? Sit down for a while, Mrs. Allen, and Susan will give you some supper. Do you live far from here?"

"In Primrose Alley, miss; it's at the North End—a goodish step from here."

"Well, rest yourself before you go back. I am very sorry indeed to hear of your trouble. Good night."

And so Lucy went back to the deserted drawing room, lonelier than the little servant in her kitchen, since no such angel's visit as she had paid to Susan was likely to disturb her own solitude.

She found a book, and curled herself up on a sofa to read; but somehow Shakspeare slid from her lap; and, clasping her hands behind her head, she sat and stared absently into the fire, now following Ada in fancy to Upper Brunswick street, and trying to imagine the pleasant family party assembled there, and now reminded in spite of herself of the sickening story she had just been listening to in the kitchen.

"If Heaven would only not let little children suffer?" she thought, bewildered. "Big people can take care of themselves; but just think of that poor little fellow all alone, and with no sense—it seemed dreadful! And the world is so uneven somehow. I wish the children that need care and love, and the women and girls who have nothing to fill their hearts with could be brought together, instead of staying so wide apart that they hardly ever hear of each other. But I am afraid it is of no use to wish. And I can do nothing else!"

Again Lucy's thoughts wandered off to Upper Brunswick street; it was getting late—they must have finished dinner by now, and were back in the drawing room talking and listening to music, and laughing together.

"It must be pleasant," she sighed involuntarily. "I wish I was there too. It is very lonely here at night."

Then some inexorable hand seemed to be laid over the eyes of her fancy shutting out the picture of the pleasant house in Upper Brunswick street, and lifting itself again to show her poor Mrs. Allen's sorrowful garret in Primrose Alley.

"It is lonelier for her," thought Lucy remorsefully. "She is only a charwoman, but I suppose she feels her loss as much as Shakspheare's Queen Constance, only she would not know how to talk about it like that. I wonder if any one in very deep grief could talk about it so much? Oh"—a smile trembled on the girl's sad lips—"it would be doubting Shakspeare to suggest such a thing! I could never be happy any more with Rosalind and Touchstone in Arden Forest, or on the Island with Miranda, if I committed such high treason!"

She took up her book again, and tried to read; but her thoughts seemed to defy the enchanter's wand and escape from his control.

"I cannot help thinking of that poor little troubled child," she said, starting up and walking nervously about the room. "I wish—oh, how I wish that something could be done to prevent any more such cruel accidents! Why could not Ada and I do something! We have so much time, and so little to do."

A grave frown settled down between Lucy's blue eyes; all manner of half formed plans were floating through her eager young brain. Time was passing, the old church clock struck ten.

"Why shouldn't we contrive something?" she repeated. "I will speak to Ada when she comes home."

Before long she heard the carriage wheels grinding over the gravel of the little drive, and she ran joyfully to open the door for her cousin.

Miss Ludlow's little lady's maid was ready to help her to undress as soon as she had paid a visit to her mother's room and had assured herself that she was sleeping tranquilly. Lucy had, besides, prepared a little surprise in the shape of a small fire in her cousin's bed room, and a touch of frost in the October night air made it very acceptable.

"And now you will tell me all about it, won't you?" Lucy cried eagerly, as she unfastened the pale abundance of Miss Ludlow's hair and shook it in a loose shower over her blue dressing gown.

"What shall I tell you?" asked Ada somewhat languidly, as she put her little slippered feet on the fender. "That Bee Throgmorton is to marry young Mr. Ackroyd? That seems to be settled."

"Is she really?" cried Lucy, flushing with pretty womanly sympathy.

"I should say so. Of course her people mean that she shall. And I suppose she will, in spite of——"

"In spite of what?" asked Lucy breathlessly.

"In spite of any objections she may feel disposed to raise. I do not think"—Miss Ludlow shrugged her shoulders gently—"that Bee quite sees how fortunate she is."

"Then you like Mr. Ackroyd? Miss Throgmorton seems such a pretty girl; I hope he is nice too."

"He is very rich, and silent, and by no means bad looking. And he is at present head over ears in love with her. That is all I have been able to discover from one evening's acquaintance. But it is quite enough, is it not?"

Ada seemed somewhat out of spirits, and answered her cousin's questions with a kind of reluctance.

"And the Doctor! Did you see him too?"

"He did not put in an appearance." Miss Ludlow was stifling a yawn as she spoke. "I suppose a Doctor's time is never his own; and, much to Mrs. Throgmorton's disappointment apparently, he had been summoned to Irmingham for a consultation, I believe."

Lucy's face fell.

"I wish you had seen him," she said, in a disappointed voice. "But of course you will before long."

"Oh, no doubt!" Miss Ludlow yawned again behind her slim white hand. "Mrs. Throgmorton is urging me very much to get Doctor March to see mamma. Indeed they are all very enthusiastic in his praises."

"He must be very clever," said Lucy, who would gladly have set up half the night talking, she was so hungry for sympathy and for living flesh and blood interests in her daily life. She did not want to gossip; she only wanted to live, instead of existing as she had done at the convent, and as she was still doing in Barlaston Regis. It was so hard to get up a very absorbing interest in housework, and gardening, and the sad little books she read to her aunt for so many hours a day.

Lucy was trying very hard to be contented, and had no idea of missions or calls outside of her home duties; but her nature was a very warm and earnest one; and now Ada seemed to have brought home with friendly airs from the happy world outside the walls of the dull little villa in King's Road which had set all her nerves quivering and her pulses thrilling in some unaccountable way—pleasant echoes of fireside talk, and hints of budding romances, which would bloom for other girls though they might never bloom for her.

"I wonder if you will like Doctor March?" she continued wistfully, dying to make Ada tell her more, like a child who is listening to a fairy tale, and as anxious as any child could be to put off the evil hour of going to her lonely little bed room under the roof.

"If mamma will like him, you mean, I suppose? That remains to be seen. But one thing is certain; I shall not be in the least surprised if I dream about him to-night. I have heard of nothing else all the evening. George March's position—George March's practice—George March's good temper and good works—c'en est trop de leur George March!"

"Is his name George? I like it; don't you, Ada? And, if you do dream about him, you are likely to have pleasanter dreams than mine. Mine are sure to be about poor little Joe Allen."

And then, in a few eager words, Lucy told her cousin what she had that evening heard, and poured out her kindly incoherent little plans for the prevention of such horrors in the future.

"Can't we think of something, Ada," she cried, clasping her hands with unconscious pathos. "The days are so long, and I have so little to do. Couldn't we go to Primrose Alley and inquire?"

"But there is always mamma to think of," said Miss Ludlow, gently, "and the danger of infection in both places. It is very admirable in you to wish to go, dear Lucy; but I am afraid such work is best done by people who are accustomed to it."

Lucy sighed.

"We must give Mrs.—the poor woman you speak of—some assistance, of course. But anything else is out of the question, situated as we are. The district visitor style would be in very bad taste. It always does look so like running after the Curate not that I suspect you for one instant of such an intention, dear Lucy!"

Lucy colored, uttering and eager disclamor.

"And now," concluded Miss Ludlow, rising with a pretty yawn, "I think we have gossiped enough for once, and had better say good night."

"Good night," echoed Lucy a little sadly. "Good night, Ada; I wish you pleasant dreams about George March."

CHAPTER XI.

It was late that night before Doctor March returned to Barlaston from the neighboring town of Birmingham, whither he had been summoned for consultation too late to look into the brown room; so he drove straight home, remembering with an involuntary smile as he passed by Upper Brunswick Street, that he had again failed to meet Miss Ludlow, and that he was sure of a blowing up next day from Mrs. Throgmorton.

"It is droll," he thought, "how persistently the young lady and I seem to have been playing hide and go seek ever since her arrival! I wonder whether she begins to look upon me as a masculine Mrs. Harris? I am not quite sure that I believe in her existence just yet. By Jove, how cold it is and how jolly tired I feel!"

Good Mrs. Batters was on the watch for her master's key in the door, and George's study was a picture of snugness as he went in, the curtains drawn, the fire sparkling, the reading lamp and table and easy chair adjusted to a nicety.

"Ah, this looks cosy!" said the young man kindly, throwing himself into the chair and lighting his cigarette. "Thank you, Batters. I shall enjoy my magazine all the more for being tired out. Don't let a soul come near me if it can be helped."

Even while he was speaking the words a loud peal from the hall bell rang through the quite house; and Mrs. Batters, hastening off to see what it could mean, returned, her face full of annoyance, to say that Mrs. Throgmorton begged the Doctor to hasten without delay to the Tower House King's Road.

"Can't be helped!" said George, smothering a sigh and getting tiredly out of his comfortable chair while the good old house keeper murmured respectful sympathy for the master's weary limbs and brains; and in a few moments he was out again in the chill starlit square, where the leafless bushes stood sentinel behind the iron railings, and had started on foot for King's Road.

The door of the villa was opened to him by Mrs. Throgmorton, who also had been summoned to her friend's bed side; and in a few whispered words she described the heavy fainting fit from which Mrs. Ludlow had just recovered, and prepared to take him to the sick room.

Poor little Lucy was hovering wistfully round the door as they passed in together; but at sight of the Doctor she turned and flew up to her own room on the landing above. She had seen only a pair of broad shoulders and a dark close cropped head; but she felt guilty somehow, and did not dare to venture down again. She sat on the edge of her bed, trembling all over, half with vague terror and half with excitement, and waited to be called if any one should need her service.

The house was very still. With the Doctor's presence a sense of quietude and relief had fallen on the fluttering women.

"I am so glad he has come," thought Lucy, wringing her hands and shivering a little. "Poor aunt Letitia. I am glad he has come."

And so George March and Ada Ludlow had met at last, though in a very different manner from what had been hoped and planned. For, after all the discussions which had been held that very day on her dress, with a view to creating a favorable first impression on the young man's mind, the young lady was fated to receive him in a simple blue dressing gown, with all her hair unbound and falling below her waist.

The fact was naturally lost upon the Doctor while he was attending to his patient; but, when, his work in the sick room being at an end, he prepared to follow Miss Ludlow down stairs, where she was to hear his final instructions, he looked at her with some curiosity. That pale serious girl, whose little figure was nearly smothered in the shower of flaxen hair which from time to time she thrust indifferently behind her ears, and who hung so intently on his words and looks—was this the much talked about Miss Ludlow?

"I will drive you home, Doctor," said Mrs. Throgmorton, as she sat by the invalid, who was lying, happy and at rest, with her hand clasped in that of her friend. "Let me know when you are ready, and I will come down. There," she added, "that will give them time to become acquainted; and poor Letitia likes me to sit with her."

The small front drawing room was empty, and the gas had been lowered by careful Susan. Ada put up her hand to turn it on, but failed to reach the chandelier.

"Let me," said George kindly, moved to pity by her frailness, and by the quiet word of thanks she uttered. "I am afraid you are not very fit for such anxiety as you have been enduring to night," he added. "Don't let me have two patients to-morrow instead of one."

"Oh, I am always pale!" returned Ada, with gentle indifference, as George followed her to the fire and stood with his back to the mantelpiece. "And now, Doctor March,"—she fixed her large calm eyes steadily on his face—"pray tell me the truth about mamma."

A little professional talk followed, which George made as brief and as encouraging as possible.

When Miss Ludlow had heard him to the end, and had begged him to repeat the assurance that her mother's condition need cause her no especial alarm, she seemed to find time at last to look at George March as if he were a man and not merely a doctor—with a girl's, and not merely an anxious daughter's eyes.

They were still standing on the hearthrug together, and Ada, hearing so favorable a statement, let the pale lines of her face relax at last into a smile, and held out her hand with a graceful impulse to thank the Doctor for this release from anxiety. And then she seemed to notice for the first time what manner of man this George March was of whom she had heard so much.

The strong, plain face, lit up by its white teeth and by the cool dark eyes that met her gaze so steadily, the quiet distinction of this provincial doctor's entire appearance—none of this was lost on Miss Ludlow; and her lips parted slowly with an unmistakable expression of pleased surprise, as who should say, "I did not think you would be half so nice!"

Doctor March on his side was equally interested in the strange young lady with whose name his ears had been ringing for some weeks; and, feeling perhaps that his night's rest was already irretrievably broken, or being unwilling to take Mrs. Throgmorton away from his patient, who appeared to cling so fondly to her old friend, he threw himself into an easy chair opposite to Ada's on the hearthrug, and began to chat with her while he waited.

Miss Ludlow never said very much; but she had a little manner of pausing before she answered, as though impressed by, and desirous of weighing, what her companion had said, together with a variety of calm gestures while listening, which were more flattering than most people's words.

She was busy as usual with a piece of work, which she had instinctively taken up when she saw the Doctor was in no hurry to be gone; and these pauses became doubly eloquent when the work was allowed to sink into her lap, and her eyes were raised for a few moments from the group of cyclamen which was growing beneath her skilful fingers on a black satin ground, and rested inquiringly on her companion's face. And she succeeded in making George talk about himself, though he wondered to find himself doing it, and about his life in Barlaston, expressing some well bred surprise at the fact of his having settled there so contentedly after years of study in Paris and London, which, as she understood, had been the prologue to his entering upon Doctor Featherstone's practice.

"Well, of course one does not look for much diversity or variety of outline in country life," the young man admitted, smiling. "But my happiness has always seemed independent of my surroundings. I am afraid, though, that you, Miss Ludlow, being younger and a woman, may at first feel a little oppressed in dear old Barlaston, where every body knows everybody else's business and feels justified in using the knowledge freely."

"But you are happy here?" Miss Ludlow asked, with the faintest little accent on the pronoun which raised Doctor March above the general Barlaston level. "Miss Throgmorton has told me very often that they consider you settled here for good."

"Yes," George returned; "that proves how the provincial influences have been at work upon me. I suppose I ought to be ambitious of a London reputation; but I like this old town. I am always finding something fresh here to interest me and to attach me to the place."

"But no doubt the tide of events will one day carry you up to the big city in spite of yourself, as it carries gradually all the promise and talent of the provinces, it seems to me."

"I think not. I have made so very many kind friends here, for one thing. I certainly look upon Barlaston as my home for many years to come. I have taken root here, in fact; and, in tearing myself away, I should leave the best that is in me behind, I am afraid."

Then came one of Miss Ludlow's little pauses, half admiring, half doubtful.

"Is it quite wise to have come to such a decision already," she asked gently—"at your age, and with your genius? Bee is always telling me of your reputation here, Doctor March; and indeed, if my questions appear a little indiscreet, when we have known each other only for a few minutes, you must blame Bee—and Mrs. Throgmorton, of course—not me. She—I mean they have spoken of you so constantly that I feel it almost absurd to be at all formal in talking to you, though"—with a half smile and down dropped the white eyelids—"you must be allowed, I admit, to consider me a stranger."

"You don't know how obstinately we love our neighbors as ourselves down here," George returned, laughing. "No one is a stranger in Barlaston after a week. And you must remember that, if Mrs. Throgmorton has spoken of me to you, I also have been hearing a good deal about her new friend from Miss Bee."

Miss Ludlow looked up brightly from her her work, and George was surprised to see how her smile lit up her calm face.

"Bee is charming!" she cried warmly. "I am afraid I envy you a little bit, Doctor March, for having the first place in her regard! I can never be anything more than second now; and I have formed the sincerest liking for her."

"Every one loves Bee," agreed the young man heartily.

"And—especially one person?" hazarded Ada gently. "If I am treading on forbidden ground, Doctor March, you must warn me off!"

"Oh, no!" George laughed good humouredly. "I think that can hardly be called a secret any longer."

Miss Ludlow raised her eyes again and fixed them on the Doctor's face with another pretty smile.

"Perhaps Bee herself is the only person who is unaware of it?" she said. "Poor Romeo had rather an absent minded Juliet last night. I may be fanciful, but it seemed to me that she played all her prettiest music to some one who was not in the room—in the flesh, at least!"

"Oh, Bee is such a child yet!" George answered kindly. "She hardly knows or care to know her feelings, I suppose."

"Y-e-s," assented the young lady rather doubtfully; and a little silence fell on the room.

Then Mrs. Throgmorton came in, announcing that Mrs. Ludlow had fallen asleep, and that it was time for them all to follow her example.

The doctor pressed Miss Ludlow's hand very cordially as he rose to go. It seemed as if their little talk all to themselves at such an unconventional hour, and even the graceful disorder of Ada's appearance, had made them more familiar than a dozen ordinary meetings could possibly have done.

Mary Throgmorton observed the rapid advance towards intimacy that had been made during her absence, and she rejoiced inwardly.

"I will come and sit with your mother to-morrow, my love," she said, as Ada went to the door with them herself in order to close it noiselessly. "Bee must take you for a good walk if it is fine. Go in out of the cold," she added from the carriage window, as the wind blew Ada's long fair hair across the girl's face and against Doctor March's lips with a faint scent of violet. "And mind you let Miss Thrale take her share of the watching to-night. You are looking completely worn out."

"Oh, poor Lucy is asleep by this time!" returned Ada gently. "It would be a pity to disturb her."

"Good night, Miss Ludlow," said the Doctor. "I shall see you early to-morrow;" and he held out his hand for the second time. Then, remembering, he drew it back, laughing at himself.

But Ada laughed too, and frankly extended her own, and the action was like a seal on the young man's unwritten bond of friendship.

"Now isn't she a charming girl?" cried Mrs. Throgmorton, when the door of the villa had closed on the slender wind blown figure, and the carriage was bowling swiftly along the frost bound solitudes of King's Road, the windows of which were all asleep and glimmering darkly in the faint light of the moon.

"Indeed, I think she is," responded George warmly; "and I am very sorry for her."

Mary Throgmorton remembered what pity was akin to, and again she was full of inward rejoicing.

"It is a sad come-down for her, poor girl!" she said kindly. "But you will admit that she bears it wonderfully well."

"I was thinking of her mother," returned George soberly. "Mrs. Ludlow is very delicate indeed, I am afraid."

When Ada returned to the drawing room, she put her embroidery neatly away in its little satin lined basket, and rolled the chairs back into their places with the orderly instinct that was natural to her.

Lucy, coming creeping down stairs in her little slippers, and looking very blue and cold from her vigil under the roof, found her cousin standing on the hearthrug lost in thought, and with her arms folded across her bosom like a small flaxen haired Napoleon.

"What does he say?" the child asked, in a nervous whisper as she knelt down by the fire to warm her starved fingers. "Will aunt Letitia get better? Can I do anything to help you, Ada, to night?"

Miss Ludlow started, sighing wearily and passing her hand across her eyes.

"Mamma is better," she said gently; "but I shall sit up with her to night."

"No, indeed," protested Lucy earnestly; "you are tired enough already. I will stay with aunt Letitia. I will doze in the arm chair by the fire, and call you if she wakes. Please, Ada! She won't mind having me for this once."

"I do not like," began Ada, with reluctance; but Lucy silenced her with a kiss.

"That is settled," she said, nodding brightly. "She is asleep now—I peeped in as I came down. Susan is bringing you a cup of hot bouillon; you know you always like that when you are tired."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A STRANGE SHIPWRECK.

The wreck of the Danish mail steamer Phœnix, which took place off the west coast of Iceland on January 29, was attended with rather unusual circumstances deserving of note. The vessel (about 450 tons burden) sailed with cargo and the mails from Copenhagen for Leith, the Faroe Islands and Iceland, about the middle of January.

Nothing particular occurred until after leaving the Faroes, when she ran into a severe gale, which rapidly increased to a perfect hurricane, while at the same time the temperature fell to about 50° F° of frost (−18° F.). Such cold is not extraordinary in these latitudes in winter, but fortunately it is seldom associated with very high winds. Under the circumstances in which the Phœnix was placed every sea that she shipped froze, and the deck soon became covered with a foot or two of solid ice.

As time passed on the continued action of the sea raised a perfect iceberg on the forward part of the vessel, while the showers of spray carried along by the steadily increasing gale covered the masts, yards, and rigging with an ever thickening coating of ice. Two or three days passed without the least sign of abatement of the storm, and then the half smothered steamer went over on her beam-ends. The crew succeeded in cutting away the masts, and she once more righted.

It, however, was clear, the gale showing no signs of breaking, that the relief was only temporary. The ice continued to form on the vessel, particularly about the forecastle, where, piled high above the bulwarks, and overhanging the sides, it threatened, by altering her trim, to raise the propeller out of the water.

Under these circumstances, on the morning of January 29, Captain Kihl decided to run the steamer ashore while daylight lasted. At some distance from the land she struck on a sunken rock, and the crew, taking to the boats, only succeeded with the greatest difficulty in reaching the shore, saving nothing but their lives, the English mail and a bundle of blankets, which, when carried ashore, was found to be useless—frozen into a solid lump. Their situation in deep snow on the desolate coast of Iceland about 100 miles to the north-west of Reykjavik, was very critical, and a party of two or three of the strongest sailors under the command of M. Jaspersin, the first officer, proceeded in search of assistance. It was not, however, till about 3 in the morning of the 30th, after suffering great hardships, that the sound of a pony kicking in a shed guided them to a house. The farmers immediately turned out, and eventually the scattered crew, twenty-two or twenty-three in number, were picked up, some of the clever little Icelandic dogs proving themselves most valuable auxiliaries in the search. Many of the men, however, were all but frozen to death in the snow. From this time all possible attention was given to them; but one, having both legs and arms frost bitten, died; another afterwards had both legs amputated below the knees; and the steward lost three fingers of each hand. Hardly one escaped more or less injury from the effects of the extreme cold to which they had been so long exposed. The officers and men of the wrecked vessel are of opinion that had Captain Kihl not decided on the 28th to run the Phoenix ashore in daylight not a soul would have been saved, as the gale did not moderate for several days after; and the steamer, buried as it was under an enormous mass of ice, must have foundered in the night.

In Iceland this storm will be long remembered by the destruction it caused; and it is said that such a terrible winter has not been known for years. Sheep have perished in large numbers, and ponies have been killed to save hay. Then as the Icelanders depend on the outer world for flour, etc., the loss of the Phœnix with its cargo was a terrible misfortune.

—"How do you train tomatoes?" asks an agricultural contributor. Well, we generally train the lighter ones for trapeze business and clog dancing, and put the heavy weights through for cannon ball tossing, breaking anvils, shouldering horses and that sort of thing. Occasionally you will be able to train a few into good square trotters. When we were at home, and there were four boys of us, we used to train the over ripe ones over against old Charley Fisher's barn—distance, 120 feet.

—Pennsylvania has a new law forbidding the playing of pool or any other game of chance of any kind, and imposing fine and imprisonment on all who violate the statute.

AMONG THE FASHIONS.

—Japanese crape in softest tints of shell pink, cream, Minerva's eye, blue wild rose, violet and canary colored, is a very popular fabric for handsome evening dress. A great quantity of flowers and leaves are worn with these toilets—from the dainty necklace of lilies of the valleys or snow drops twined loosely around the throat and fastened with a single rose to the long graceful garlands and clusters of roses, daisies, and straggling grasses scattered all over the dress.

—A large French round hat showing the handiwork of Magnier and Dinn is of black open work straw, lined with wild rose colored satin. Under the rolling brim on the left side is a cluster of tearoses and a spray of pomegranate blossoms. Over the crown is draped a black Spanish lace scarf densely beaded with jets, and held at the sides by costly jet ornaments. A full black ostrich plume droops over the left side of the hat, partly covering the flowers, and the broad scarf strings are brought around in front and caught together by a handsome jet clasp.

—Collars are made immensely large for morning wear. Same of these are scalloped out and embroidered in bright colors, then finished with an edging of Smyrna lace. Well selected, they give a pretty effect to the whole dress. Very stylish also are the large plaited Recamier collars of Surah, in the shaded colours, edged with ombre lace and fastened with a somewhat loose bow of the Surah. These cape-like collars are particularly appropriate when worn with the Jersey bodice, as they change in a degree the plain, severe appearance of these close-fitting waists.

—The new fans are enormous—too large for grace, and, consequently, to heavy for comfort. All kinds of devices are applied to their ornamentation. They are painted, embroidered, trimmed with moss and flowers, and frequently with lace or embroidery. The prettiest are those made of lace laid on opal tinted mother-of-pearl sticks, but these are not new, and have to make way for novelties. Bouquets, too, are enormous, and it is now *chic* to have them composed entirely of one kind of flower. A lovely one, worn at a recent dance, consisted of every kind of carnation, picotee, pink, flowers which all belong to one family, but show many varieties of complexion.

—Dresses for dancing are still made very short. The crinolettes wave about at the back rather ungracefully, and suggestive of a rattlesnake, especially when the wearer has been sitting down, and has managed inadvertently to push the stiffened muslin support to one side. The effect in such a case is by no means good. Bodices are as tightly moulded to the figure as ever, and have but little trimming, though quantities are lavished on the skirt. More elaboration in the arrangement of the hair is apparent and the hybrid Greek style will soon disappear. Charming as it was on a pretty head, it proved terribly trying to one of imperfect outlines.

—Cotton cashmere is a material just produced, in which the soft diagonal twill peculiar to cashmere is combined with the washing qualities of cotton proper. This fabric is made in white and pale tints, and is especially pretty in cream color and very pale pink. The texture is very soft, and the material has the additional recommendation of being expensive. For tennis dresses it will be extremely popular. Tussore silk is again in great favor. There are few materials that look so delightfully cool as the Indian fabric in the natural undyed color. Oriental silks and foulards are in great demand, their softness of texture lending itself to the many gaugings, gatherings and plaitings of the dresses of to day.

—Here is a specimen. A skirt of dark wall flower red satteen, made with three flounces; each of these is gathered closely for about two inches of its depth, and is edged with a band of pompadour satteen in an Oriental pattern of sprigs in every possible color, closely covering a cream colored ground. The polonaise is of the flowered satteen, and is gathered for about four inches of its depth round the neck. The loose folds are held in at the waist by a band of the dark red satteen. Very tight sleeves of the same are surmounted by short upper sleeves of the flowered stuff, reaching midway from the shoulder to the elbow. These small over sleeves are also closely gathered.

—A dress worn at the Oaks. Walking skirt, of white satin, covered with white lace. Over this a polonaise of gold brocade, with a tracery of the palest pink flowers. This was made to fit the figure very tightly, except just below the waist, where the folds formed paniers. These were held back by sprays of pink blossoms. The large cream colored lace hat had a similar spray under its brim, while over it a very long feather, shaded in cream color and gold, encircled the head and drooped at the back over the hair. A large proportion of white dresses was worn, and looked deliciously cool in the prevailing dust and heat. A lovely dress was of a very pale blue and white stripped cambric, made very simply, but fitting a beautiful figure to perfection. A white bonnet was worn with it, with pale blue flowers, and very wide lace strings. The revival of the long lost white bonnet is hailed with delight by the possessors of good complexions, whether natural or artificial.

—Real flowers are not worn in such quantities on dresses or in the hair as they were last season. It was a pretty and a graceful fashion, but it had its inconveniences. The flowers soon drooped, and hung limp and dejected from their stalks, and the moisture that is inseparable from living blooms very often injured the fabric or the color of the dress. With artificial flowers these difficulties are obviated, and as far as effect goes they are quite equal to nature—so perfectly do the makers now reproduce the natural forms. The bonnet worn by the Princess of Wales at the Derby was an instance of this. The pink and crimson roses which formed a garland round it could not be distinguished from real at a little distance. Last season every ball room witnessed quite a holocaust of lovely blooms, and the aspect of a flower decked dancer at the end of the evening was far from picturesque, with the ragged remains of once lovely blossoms hanging about her. Now, the most indefatigable dancer may manage to retain her freshness of appearance throughout the evening.

PROFITABLE TREE CULTURE.

(Chicago Tribune.)

The smartest Texan and, in fact, the smartest farmer I have ever met is old Sam Graves, who lives on a 1000 acre farm west of Waxahatchie, in Central Texas. After Mr. Graves had shown me his cattle and cotton, he took me up to see his woods.

"Well, what of it?" I said, as he pointed to a ten acre forest.

"What of it! Why, them's black walnut, sir. Ten acres of 'em. Planted 'em myself ten years ago. See, they're nine inches through. Good trees, eh?"

And sure enough, there were ten acres of hand planted black walnut trees. They stood about twelve feet apart, about two hundred to the acre, in all two thousand trees.

"Well, how did you get your money back?" I asked.

"Black walnuts are worth $2.50 a bushel, ain't they? I'll get four hundred bushels this year. That's $1000. A hundred dollars an acre is good rent for land worth fifteen hundred an acre, ain't it?"

"Well, what else?" I inquired growing interested.

"The trees," continued Mr. Graves, "are growing an inch every year. When they are twenty years old they will be nineteen inches through. A black walnut tree nineteen inches through is worth twenty five dollars. My two thousand trees two years from now will be worth fifty thousand dollars. If I don't want to cut them all I can cut half of them, and then raise a bushel of walnuts to the tree, that is, get two thousand five hundred a year for the crop. Two hundred and fifty dollars an acre is fair rent for fifteen dollar land, ain't it?"

A REMARKABLE PONY.

A well authenticated and extraordinary case of the sagacity of the Shetland pony has just come under our notice. A year or two ago Mr. William Sinclair, pupil teacher, Holm, imported one of these little animals from Shetland on which to ride to and from school, his residence being at a considerable distance from the school buildings. Up to that time the animal had been unshod, but some time afterward Mr. Sinclair had it shod by Mr. Pratt, the parish blacksmith. The other day Mr. Pratt, whose smithy is a long distance from Mr. Sinclair's house, saw the pony, without halter or anything upon it, walking up to where he was working. Thinking the animal had strayed from home, he drove it off, throwing stones after the beast to make it run homeward. This had the desired effect for a short time; but Mr. Pratt had only got fairly to work once more in the smithy when the pony's head again made its appearance at the door.

On proceeding the second time outside to drive the pony away, Mr. Pratt, with a blacksmith's instinct took a look at the pony's feet, when he observed that one of the shoes had been lost. Having made a shoe he put it on, and then waited to see what the animal would do. For a moment it looked at the blacksmith as if asking whether he was done, then pawed once or twice to see if the newly shod foot was comfortable, and finally gave a pleased neigh, erected his head and started home at a brisk trot. The owner was exceedingly surprised to find the animal at home completely shod the same evening, and it was only on calling at the smithy some days afterward that he learned the full extent of his pony's sagacity.

TIN WEDDING PRESENTS.

Odd, But Popular Fruits of the Late Mr Musgrove's Fancy.

The inventor who began to make tin wedding presents by wholesale died in this city recently. He was born in London, and for many years carried on a wholesale flower business in Liverpool. Then he went into the tinware business in this city, in Forty-first street, near Ninth avenue. Although Mr. Musgrove had became a practical tinner, yet he remained a scientific florist at heart, and one day it occurred to him that he might bring flowers and tin together by making tin bouquets for tin weddings. He wisely chose such flowers for the purpose as are remarkable for pretty shapes rather than for color. Marigolds and asters, field daisies and buttercups, calla and tiger lilies, tulips, camellias, and roses were imitated faithfully, even to their stamens and pistils; but orchids, fuchsias, and begonias were too complicated in structure to be taken as patterns, while forget-me nots, mignonette, and lilies of the valley were too delicate to be thought of for a moment. The arrangement of the tin flowers in the bouquet was after the manner of natural flowers, and the inventor conceived the happy notion of constructing a little tank in the tulip that crowned the bouquet, in which such perfumes as new mown hay, heliotrope, japonica, or violet might be carried, so that their fragrance should be dispensed by the wedding guest who carried the tin flowers.

Rival tinners in this city openly declared that the inventor was a vaporing sentimentalist. At tin weddings, they asked, had not the presents always been of kitchen ware, useful and not ornamental? Why, then, try to get up mock fancy articles? But Mr. Musgrove replied that everybody liked fun at a wedding, and that he believed he could help it along. Common kitchen utensils which had been presented at the wedding, he added, are soon mixed up with the boughten wares, and thus the precious fact that they were presents from dear friends is lost to mind. Quaint and fanciful articles made from tin would be preserved as souvenirs.

The most striking objects simulated in tinware are a man's silk hat and a woman's English walking hat. On one side of the hat is a wreath of tin flowers, while on the opposite side of the crown waves a tin feather. Two ribbons of tin hang down at an angle of forty-five degrees behind, and in front is a tin pompon.

"Do wealthy people buy these things?" one of the firm was asked yesterday.

"Yes; they are the only people who do buy them," he replied.

"How far away do you send them?"

"That lady's hat is to be sent to-morrow to Rio de Janeiro. We deal with tinners all over the country."

The demand is greatest in the fall. That is the time when the largest number of weddings, and therefore of wedding anniversaries, takes place.—*New York Sun.*

A BRIDE OF A DAY.

A Wife of Sixteen who Lived with Her Husband but Twenty-Four Hours.

During the term of the superior court, now in session at Meriden, Conn., among the divorces granted was one to Eliza Miner from Edward Mahoney, both of Meriden, on the ground of habitual drunkenness. There has probably never been a parallel case disposed of in any divorce court in this country. Affairs of this nature have been heard of but seldom, outside of romances and story papers. The facts in the case are as follows:

Mahoney and Miss Miller were married in 1877, and the echo of the wedding festivities had not died out when the troubles which led to the decree of divorce began. After the ceremony was performed, the apparently supremely happy bride and groom drove to the house of the mother of the bride, where a reception was held. Everything passed off harmoniously during the afternoon, and nothing appeared to mar the good time until late in the evening.

Refreshments were abundantly served, and there was every variety, from the lemonade for the ladies, to the smile for the men. No one seemed to enjoy the dance any more than the bride, who led the first cotillion with her newly created sovereign. Merrily the revelry went on rather late into the night but soon a damper was thrown over the jolity of the gathering. The groom was missing. The bride herself searched, and finally, in one of the rooms up stairs, she came across her lord stretched out on a bed, and evidently not in a fit condition to be again presented to those who had come to celebrate the nuptials. He was dead drunk.

The sight aroused the fiery French temper of the bride, and then followed quite a scene. She declared that she would not live with him. No one believed that she meant what she said, but time has proved that she was in earnest. In the morning the friends of the newly made couple tried to conciliate the happy bride, but they did not succeed. Mahoney had apartments nicely furnished, to which he intended to bring his wife, but the inducements of a pretty home seemed to have no effect upon the wilful girl bride. She was only 16.

The household goods were sold, and Mrs. Mahoney went to Vermont and Canada, where she had relatives, and remained there about a year. About a year ago Mrs. Mahoney came back to Meriden and continued to live with her mother and never noticed her husband. The only open breach that occurred was last fall, during the French fair. Mrs. Mahoney was in attendance every night as a canvasser, and her cousin, a married man who lived near her house, used to accompany her home. Mahoney went to the hall one night, and the sight of his wife going home with another man maddened him.

He followed the couple, and on one of the quiet streets ran up behind the man and assaulted him. Mahoney was fined in the police court the next morning. Immediately after, Mrs. Mahoney took steps to get a divorce. She is now free, and enjoys the reputation of being the only live woman who never lived a day with her live husband. Mr. Mahoney has stated on several occasion, so it is reported, that she did not refuse to live with Mahoney because he was a little indiscreet on his wedding night, but because she did not like him. She says she would never have married him but for the influence brought to bear on her by her relatives. Mrs. Mahoney, or rather Miss Miner, is living in Meriden at present, and so is her ex-husband.

SELECTING HUSBANDS.

A Turkish slave ship was captured the other day by an English vessel, and the slaves it contained, consisting of seventy women and ten men, were liberated. The men volunteered into the Egyptian army, but it was more difficult to dispose of the women. Under the treaty concluded between the English Government and the Khedive the importation and exportation of slaves are forbidden; but the detention and sale of slaves in the country are permitted for about six years longer in Egypt and eleven years in the Soudan. Several officers accordingly came to the Pasha of the district with offers to buy some of the female slaves, but the Pasha declared that he would not part with them unless they got married. He then announced that any soldier or civilian wishing to marry one of the slaves would have to pay six thalers for her dowry, but that the women would be allowed to choose their husbands from among those who should present themselves for the purpose. A great number of men, chiefly soldiers, assembled on the day appointed for the selection. The women were so shy that they "huddled together like a flock of sheep," and could not be induced to move. At last one of them, taking courage, advanced slowly to a black Egyptian sergeant, who was anything but young or handsome, and put her hand on his shoulder as a sign that he was the man she wished to marry. Her example was instantly followed by the other women, who rushed forward to choose their husbands as if they feared to be too late. It was now the men's turn to say whether they accepted the selection. All were satisfied but five, and even the five women who were consequently obliged to choose again were ultimately provided with husbands.

—The Pueblo, Col., *Banner* relates a ludicrous incident which occurred in the perform-

—It is stated that the comet observed in various places yesterday is not the one discovered recently at the observatory in the Argentine Republic, so there are now two large brilliant comets visible at the same time from one continent. The phenomenon is probably unequalled in astronomical history.

—The police of London are said to be loud in praise of their new helmet. It is of blue cloth stretched over a cork body, with a lengthened peak at the back, an effective protection from sun or rain and designed to carry the latter to the center of the cape. The helmet is light and cool.