

Hallowell's right to do as he chose with his own; and so the poor school-mistress passed peacefully into possession.

Miss Esterley was an orphan, twenty-three years of age, tall and fine looking, and with more character than is generally given to one individual. Now that she had the power she asserted herself grandly.

The Hallowell home-place was put under a series of valuable improvements which soon changed its entire aspect. Decaying trees were cut down, fresh, young ones were planted, a spacious flower garden, with extensive graperies and green houses, flourished where had been only a stretch of dismal heath; the stock in the stables was overhauled, and great changes made, the Hallowell House was rebuilt and remodeled, until it was the finest residence in the country round. Miss Esterley kept the old servants, who shortly learned to adore her, but she added new ones to the *menage*, and entertained the visitors, who hastened to honor her, in gracious and liberal style.

As a matter of course, the mistress of Hallowell House was not long wanting for lovers; they came thick and fast—some few, perhaps, attracted by her beauty and grace, but most of them keen on the scent after old Hallowell's gold.

But Marian Esterley had sense as well as good looks, and she was not deceived by their pretensions.

She remembered the time when the poor school-mistress might have sat evening after evening at parties and social gatherings, unnoticed and neglected by all these obsequious, fine gentlemen, who now professed to be so deeply in love with her; and so she treated them all with a coolness which drove them to the verge of distraction.

She had been just a year mistress of Hallowell, when one day old Gilbert came to her with a troubled face, and asked an audience.

She bade him sit down and speak without restraint, but the old man made blundering work of it. Marian had to question and encourage him continually, but at last his story was told. In effect, it was this.

When Estelle Had died, years and years before in an obscure Scottish village, she had left a son—Geo. Hallowell's child, born three months after her separation from him. This son had hated his father for the wrongs he had felt inflicted upon Estelle, and had never made himself known to him; and Mr. Hallowell had lived and died unconscious of the fact that he was a father.

This son had died two months previous, leaving one son behind him—George Hallowell's grandson and heir at law.

Clement Hallowell—that was the young man's name—was now a clerk in a bank in London, on a salary of one hundred and fifty pounds a year, and all unconscious of the fact that by right of kin he was heir to one hundred thousand pounds.

These facts old Gilbert had just learned through a friend of Estelle's—an old man who had strolled to the village, picking up a living by strumming on an ancient harp and singing a few old ballads. He had been a player in company with Estelle's father, and had always, so to speak, kept on the track of the family.

Some women would have doubted the old stroller's story; but Miss Esterley did not. She saw him herself, and got out of him every minute particular.

Old Gilbert was greatly distressed.

"I thought it my duty to tell you ma'am," he said to Marian; "but I'd rather have cut my head off. I said to Polly, said I: 'It seems a wicked, burning shame, to go and disturb the dear young lady's peace, now that everything is flowing on so beautiful.' And said Polly to me: 'Gilbert, always do your duty, man, and you'll be happy.'"

"You did perfectly right to tell me, Gilbert," said Miss Esterley, kindly. "I should have been very sorry if you had not. There has been a great wrong done. Thank Heaven, it is in my power to right it."

"What will you do, ma'am?" asked the man, though, from his own knowledge of Miss Esterley's character, it was not difficult for him to guess.

"Never mind, Gilbert," said she; "I will do what is right."

So she made a confident of Lawyer Secors, and caused him to set on foot inquiries relative to young Clement Hallowell. The information which he gathered settled the fact, beyond a reasonable doubt, that he was George Hallowell's grandson, and that he was a young man who had led a noble and irreproachable life, and, though very poor, he was respected and esteemed by all with whom he had come in contact.

Then Miss Esterley caused a conveyance of the Hallowell estate to be drawn up, and by it she gave everything into the possession of the heir-at-law. Her commands that he should come at once and attend to his inheritance, were imperative; but it was some time before Clement Hallowell could be induced to take advantage of his good fortune.

It was not until after Miss Esterley had delivered everything into the hands of Lawyer Secors as agent, and had herself left for a distant town, where a school was offered her, that young Mr. Hallowell came down from London and took possession of his own.