

hour ago, 'cause he said there was no knowin' what afternoon you'd come. And tea's ready, missis, and jest as soon as I help fetch in these trunks I'll bring in the things. And, bless heaven, missis, that you's back again. It's been powerful lonesome now, I tell yer, since you went, and Mass Larry, missis, he say so too."

Miss Harriott goes into the pretty parlour, with its lace curtains and delicate adornments, its piano and well-filled music-rack, its tables strewn with all the latest books and magazines, and on a little stand Longworth's big bouquet. She glances at it and smiles—it is like him to think of her, and send this to welcome her. Everything in the room is associated in some way with him; these books and periodicals are from him; she is his reviewer sometimes when he is in a merciful mood; that sunny southern landscape over the mantel is his gift; there is his favorite place at the open-laced window, where through so many long, warm summer evenings, through so many blustering winter nights, he has sat and talked, or read, or listened in a waking dream to her music—her true and good friend from first to last. And there is no one in the world quite so dear to her as this friend. He is the sort of man to whom many women give love, not alone the love of which poets sing and novelists write, as if human hearts held no other, but friendship strong, and tender, and true, all the nobler and more lasting, perhaps, because utterly unblended with passion.

While Miss Harriott sits in her cozy home, and sips her tea in the light of the sunset, Frank Dexter is dining with the boarders, retailing his adventures by land and sea. They are interested in these adventures, but far more interested in an event which is to come off the day after to-morrow. Mrs. Windsor—everybody there is profoundly interested in Mrs. Windsor—Mrs. Windsor's granddaughter's have arrived from Europe, and on the evening but one from this they are to be presented to Baymouth in form. They have been at the Stone House for four days, but no one has seen them yet, it would appear, except Longworth. Longworth met them in New York, Longworth escorted

them home, and has spent two evenings in their society, and Longworth has been plied with questions on all sides since with breathless interest and eagerness. Are they pretty?

But Mary Windsor's daughters, cry out the elders of the party, must of necessity be that, and then the Frenchman was said to be an uncommonly handsome man. That old, half-forgotten story that cropped up from the dust and ashes of the past, and Mary Windsor's romance of one and twenty years ago has rung the changes over and over during these four days at ever dinner-table of note in the town. And did Mrs. Windsor send for these girls, and are they to be her heiresses, and are they really handsome, and are they thoroughly French, and do they talk broken English, and will everybody Mrs. Windsor knows get cards? There is a fine flutter of expectation through Baymouth, and Mr. Longworth, of the *Phoenix*, the only man who can enlighten them, wakes all at once and finds himself famous.

He takes the breathless questions that beset him in his customary phlegmatic way, smokes and listens, and laughs a little, and drops a few syllables that are as oil to the fire of curiosity.

Frank Dexter pricks up his ear as he listens with an interest quite as great as of those around him.

"Came four days ago, and landed at New York. The *Hesperia* landed four days ago at New York. What vessel did they cross in, Longworth?"

"The *Hesperia*," responds Mr. Longworth, placidly helping himself to mint sauce.

"By George!" cries Dexter, with an energy that makes his hearers jump, "that is what Miss Harriott meant when she bet the gloves. Mrs. Windsor's granddaughters are my 'little ladies!'"

CHAPTER IX.

THE NOTE OF PREPARATION.

FRANK DEXTER is excited as he listens to the information given by Longworth at the end of our last chapter. Explanations are demanded and given.

"Are their names Reine and Marie?" Frank asks.

"Marie and Reine—Marie is the elder. Calm yourself, my Baby," replies the