

all my heart,—she is the sweetest and the dearest. You could not have chosen more to my mind. It is good news indeed, enough to wile one's mind away from weary thoughts."

John scarcely heard her out; he caught her in his strong arms and kissed her.

"Bless you for that, Dolly! you can appreciate and trust her."

"Why, of course I can," Dolly replied in surprised tones, as he released her.

"Our mother thinks it is not well," said John, in explanation. "She is quite overset. I never thought of her taking it so amiss."

Then Dolly hesitated a little, and could give small comfort, for it was well known to all Mistress Lester's children that her opinions on all points were strong and not easily shaken; but the sister said what she could, and the brother in the serenity of his happiness was not inclined to dwell upon drawbacks. Only the joy of his successful love had lacked somewhat of its first perfectness since his mother's eyes had looked upon it with dread and regretful apprehension.

"And when will it be?" asked Dorothy, as they were preparing to go in.

"As soon as may be. I must persuade Alice to have it so. I may be wanted any time a month or two hence, you are aware; and I would fain have her my wife before I go. I would fain leave my little Alice an assured place in the old house, Dolly, should aught happen to me in the way which I must go. It will be an ease to my mind, come what will, to know that Alice has her part and inheritance secure. Nay, I know that you and Mary would be sisters

to her and shield her still without that tie, and that my mother would never cast her out; but these are unsettled days, and Alice will be happier and safer as a wife than as a lonely girl without any near relations. We stand on the eve of another civil war."

"Are you sure of that, brother? Have you had any certain tidings?"

"Sure and certain. This is the 28th day of August. From what I have heard I judge the work to be already begun. But my summons is not like to come yet."

There was a pause, and then Dolly whispered, clasping her hands together so tightly that the rosy flesh grew white,

"Charlie landed at Easthaven yesterday even."

"How know you that?"

"He sent me a token by Enoch Sutton—this, (she drew the end of a blue ribbon from her dress) "and a message that the friend from whom the ribbon came was well, and going northward. Who should send tokens to me but Charlie? and besides, Enoch described him in some sort—a gallant gentleman, nobly apparelled, and gay and debonaire. It could be none else."

"There will be many coming and going in these parts to answer passing well to Enoch's description before all's over, Dolly. But 'twas Charlie Erroll, I warrant. Northward, said he? Ay, Charlie is the lad to lose no time."

"O, may God Almighty keep him safe, and prosper the good cause!" breathed poor Dolly. "I fear for him far more than for you, John, for he was ever reckless of life and limb. And to think he was so near but yesterday even, and yet I saw him not! He was journeying in haste, Enoch