

and indignation. "If she does not accept him she will deserve to be put into a lunatic asylum!" she says. "A great distress indeed! For Heaven's sake, don't say anything of that kind to Kate herself. Why, this is a settlement in life which any girl might be glad to accept. Her uncle's fortune—"

"Never mind about her uncle's fortune," says Mr. Lawrence. "If Kate is of my way of thinking, she will not consider that at all desirable. As for Mr. Vaughn, I distrust him. He is too much of a courtier, and unless I am greatly mistaken, there are claws under his velvet smoothness."

Mrs. Lawrence evidently does not esteem this a matter of importance. "The match would be admirable," she says, with emphasis, "and if you prejudice Kate against him, you will incur a great responsibility."

"I shall not prejudice her," says Mr. Lawrence. "She must decide for herself."

Unconscious of the golden opportunity hanging over her head, Kate finishes her toilet (it was while she was laying off her habit that Mrs. Lawrence came in to deliver the lecture already recorded), and goes out for a walk. She desires no companion, and fortunately the coast is clear. Sophy and Janet are with Miss Vaughn, engaged in that lively social amusement known as "paying calls." Miss Brooke is in her own room—probably writing to Mr. Fenwick—the children have taken themselves to parts unknown, and the young men—so Kate thinks—have gone to Arlingford.

She is mistaken in the latter belief. Mr. Vaughn has not gone, and when, from the window of the room where he is smoking a meditative cigar, he sees a graceful figure cross the lawn toward the woods near the house, he rises to his feet, throws his cigar away, takes his hat, and follows.

Naturally he soon overtakes it. Not expecting a pursuer, Kate loiters along her way, enjoying the dreamy beauty of the afternoon; and she has hardly more than entered the woods, when she hears a step on the crisp leaves behind her.

It would be difficult to describe her vexation, when, turning, she sees who is the intruder. No one would be welcome—for she has come out to dwell on the thought of her new-found happiness, and gild it with those dreams and fancies which youth delights to weave—but, after Tarleton's revelation of the morning, Ashton Vaughn is least welcome of any one. Her manner shows this very plainly, and his perceptions are too quick for him not to be aware of it; but his manner does not betray such a knowledge.

"May I hope for pardon?" he asks, lifting his hat. "I saw you—and, seeing you, how could I resist the temptation to follow you?"

"I thought you went to Arlingford," she says, a little curtly.

"No. I went to Arlingford this morning after you deserted me. Leaving the others to pursue the fox, I turned in that direction."

"And did not even search for me?" How kind, when I might have been sinking in a quagmire for aught you knew!"

"You had discarded my attendance and chosen another cavalier. The inference was that you thought him best able to pilot you through any difficulties which might arise."

"I don't know about the inference. The fact was that I wanted to follow the hounds as closely as possible. I acted altogether on an impulse when I followed Mr. Tarleton, and I was very sorry when we lost the dogs and—the rest of you."

If Mr. Vaughn smiles at the order of precedence, who can blame him? "Allow me to return thanks for the dogs, and—the rest of us," he says. "I can answer that to one person at least all left the chase when you went away."

"If you mean yourself," says Kate, "I don't fancy that there was a great deal of zest to you in at any time."

"Honestly, such things are not greatly to my taste," he replies. "Now that you have shown me your favorite amusements, I should like to show you some of mine."

"I should no doubt appreciate them as little as you appreciate fox-hunting."

"I hardly think so. I am sure that I should know exactly how to suit your taste."

"I am sure you would not know how to do anything of the kind," returns Kate, ungratefully. "Your tastes and mine are so different that you could not know."

"Two things which differ in order to correspond sometimes form a very harmonious whole," he says, with easy gallantry.

"But ours don't differ in order to correspond," she says. "So your quotation is not applicable."

"I am not sure of that. You must admit that some natures are more sympathetic than others."

"Of course" (impatiently). "And yours and mine are not sympathetic at all."

This is not the application which Mr. Vaughn intended, but he is not disconcerted.

"Perhaps you are not altogether able to decide that point," he says. "I have been observing you very closely, while I cannot flatter myself that you have bestowed anything like the same degree of attention on me."

"No," she answers, with discouraging decision. "I have not bestowed any particular degree of attention upon you."

"I should like for you to bestow some, then," he says, in a low tone—a tone modulated to softness, though, at the same time, he thinks that he has never before seen this maiden of the

woods so brusque and unattractive. All her pretty coquettish manner is gone, all her beguiling smiles. "I should like to win your heart, if it is to be won, my sweet cousin," he goes on, taking her hand.

To his surprise, she snatches it impetuously from his clasp, and looks at him with something very like scorn in her eyes and on her proudly-curved lips.

"I am sorry you should have taken the trouble to say this, Mr. Vaughn," she answers. "As far as you are concerned, my heart is not to be won. You could not touch it if you tried forever! It is impossible that I could fancy you under any circumstances" (this emphatically), "but I am least likely to do so when you come on such an errand as this for no better reason than because you have been sent."

Not probably since he attained to years of maturity has Ashton Vaughn blushed before—but he blushes now. There is something very awkward in being anticipated in this manner, and he inwardly execrates Mr. Lawrence for not leaving him to tell his own story.

"If you will allow me," he says, with a commendable degree of dignity, "I can explain—"

"It is not at all necessary," she interrupts. "I understand one plain fact—which is enough. Is it not true that you have been sent here by my uncle, Mr. Ashton, to endeavor to marry me?"

"Mr. Ashton suggested such an arrangement," he replies, "but you may rest assured that I should not have agreed to it if I had not found, after seeing you, that I could love you."

"You are very good," she says, with a tinge of meekness in her tone, "but since I am not able to reciprocate the sentiment, the arrangement naturally fails. You may, if you choose, tell my uncle that I would not accept his fortune if he offered it to me without condition or incumbrance. He can then judge whether I am likely to allow him to dictate to me in the choice of a husband."

Mr. Vaughn keeps his temper admirably. Evidently he has laid to heart the maxim that he who loses temper is extremely likely to lose much more besides.

"Will you listen to me?" he says. "Will you allow me to tell you how the matter really stands?"

"It is not worth while," she answers. "Nothing that you can say will make me change my decision."

"How can you tell that if you have not heard me?" he asks.

"I can tell because I know it," she answers—and then the crimson flies to her face. How can she help thinking of the pledge which already binds her!—and the expression of her transparent countenance betrays the thought to the eyes fastened on her.

"Ah!" he says. "Is that it? If you know so certainly, my fair cousin, it must be because you have already given your heart away."

"And what if I have?" she asks. "Is it any affair of yours? My answer to you would be the same under any circumstances. I have told you that."

"And perhaps it is my duty to tell you something of the man to whom you have given it," he says, quietly—but there is a gleam of anger for the first time in his eyes.

That the rejoinder which trembles on Kate's tongue would be one of open defiance is not difficult to imagine; but, fortunately, it is not spoken. At this instant the sound of horses' hoofs is heard on the forest road, and turning, they perceive a gentleman riding toward them. He reins up as he approaches, and Kate recognizes Mr. Proctor.

"O Mr. Proctor, how glad I am to see you!" she cries, holding out her hand—which Mr. Proctor instantly springs from his horse to take. "Will said you would be over to-day, but I did not expect you so early."

"Could any man, coming with an anxious heart to meet the lady of his love, ask a warmer reception or better encouragement than this? Mr. Proctor is more than satisfied, and his honest countenance fairly glows with delight. He blesses Will's good counsel in his heart, while he crushes the hand which he holds in a mighty grasp, and answers:

"I am a little earlier than I expected to be, but I started from home immediately after breakfast, and the roads are very good. I hope you have been well since I left Foulshills."

"Oh, I am always well," she answers. "We have had some very good fox-hunts since you left, and Will says the shooting has been capital. But I believe you gentlemen have not met before. Mr. Vaughn, let me introduce Mr. Proctor."

While Mr. Vaughn civilly acknowledges the introduction, Mr. Proctor looks at him distrustfully, and feels that but for Kate's delightful cordiality he should be exceedingly jealous. After this, the three turn together in the direction of the house; for Kate declines to extend her walk any farther. Mr. Proctor, with the bridle of his horse over his arm, saunters along by her side, and they talk of horses and dogs and foxes, until Mr. Vaughn's disgust is for once clearly apparent in his face.

Fortunately they reach the house before long, and, parting with her two escorts in the hall, Kate returns to her chamber. She has not been there long when the door opens, and the face of Bessie (aged twelve) appears.

"Kate," she says, "papa wants to speak to you. He is in the library."

"Oh, dear!" says Kate, clasping her hands. To herself she thinks, "Aunt Margaret has

been to him about my refusal to go with Miss Brooke, and what can I say?"

Finding no answer to this question, she takes her way very reluctantly to the library, where her uncle is sitting, with rather an anxious expression on his face, as she perceives at a glance.

"I sent for you some time ago, my dear, but was told that you had gone out," he says. "I have something important to tell you."

Kate is relieved by this. Something important to tell her cannot possibly, she thinks, mean calling her to account for a mysterious change of mind on the subject of going with Miss Brooke. She advances, therefore, with more confidence, and sinks into a low seat in front of him.

"I went out for a walk," she says. "I did not know you wanted me."

"There was no particular haste," he answers. Then he moves his papers a little nervously.

"Mr. Vaughn has been speaking to me," he goes on. "Can you imagine on what subject?"

"Of course, I can," answers Kate, with a flash of indignation. "He was not satisfied with my answer, and he has come to you about it."

"Not satisfied with your answer!" repeats her uncle, looking puzzled. "Have you given him an answer? When I saw him, he told me that he had not spoken to you."

"O—h! You must have seen him some time ago."

"I saw him an hour ago."

"An hour?" She pauses to consider for an instant. "I have seen him since then. In fact it has not been more than fifteen minutes since I parted with him. When I went to walk he followed me, and—and talked some nonsense equivalent to asking me to marry him. I told him that I would not, under any circumstances, think of such a thing, and that I was least likely to think of it when I knew that he only thought of it because he had been sent here by Mr. Ashton."

"Did he tell you that?"

"No, Miss Vaughn told Mr. Tarleton—who told me."

"Indeed!" A change comes over Mr. Lawrence's face. He looks at Kate keenly. "How did Tarleton chance to tell such a thing?" he asks.

"I suppose he thought it would interest me," she answers. "That is—he thought I ought to know it."

"I don't perceive at all how it interested him," says Mr. Lawrence. "Kate, your aunt has been speaking to me—"

"Oh, dear uncle, pray don't pay any attention to what she said!" interrupts Kate, imploringly. "I don't want to go with Miss Brooke, and you told me that I need not; but Aunt Margaret is vexed with me for refusing her offer, and—that is what it means."

To this coherent speech, Mr. Lawrence does not reply for an instant. Then he takes the girl's face between his hands, and turns it so that he can look fairly and fully into her eyes. "Kate," he says, "if such a thing is possible, I feel a deeper interest and solicitude about you than about my own daughters, because you are an orphan left in my charge. My dear, I would do anything sooner than suffer you to wreck your life as some women do. Now, tell me why you have refused Mr. Vaughn."

"Surely, you know," she answers. "I don't like him—and I would not marry any one whom Mr. Ashton sent. I do not want any share of his fortune."

"Very well," says Mr. Lawrence, in a tone of approval which it is fortunate for Mrs. Lawrence that she does not hear. "And now tell me if your aunt has any ground for her suspicion that some love-affair is going on between Frank Tarleton and yourself?"

Silence follows. What can Kate say? Never in all her life has she spoken falsely, and to begin to do so now, to her uncle of all people, and with his clear eyes questioning her—this is simply impossible. Her lids sink, she feels the blood dyeing her face until it is more like a peony than a human countenance; but her lips seem glued together; she cannot utter one word.

"I did not expect this," says Mr. Lawrence's grave voice, presently. "With all his faults, I thought Frank Tarleton was a man of honor, and I did not think that he would have ventured to trifle with you."

"Then Kate's lips are unclosed. "He has not, dear uncle; he has not!" she says. "Please, trust me that far!"

"But you—you don't know what you are asking!" says her uncle, impatiently. "You are a child—you know nothing of life. I must guard you from harm and suffering as far as lies in my power. God forgive me if I was wrong to withstand Margaret, and suffer Frank Tarleton to resume his old familiarity here, for he is not, under any circumstances, a man whom I could allow you to receive as a suitor."

This information overwhelms Kate. The color leaves her face, her eyes dilate as they gaze at him. No words could say more plainly than this change of countenance, "You cannot mean it!"

"Understand this at once and finally," says Mr. Lawrence, firmly, answering the glance. "He is ruined in fortune, he is reckless in character, he is absolutely undesirable in every respect. If you have any fancy for him—and I own that there is a great deal that is attractive about him—he is brave and put it down. Some day, God willing, you may find a man worth giving your heart to—but Frank Tarleton is not that man."

It is on the end of Kate's tongue to say "He is that man, and I have given my heart to him!" but she restrains the inclination—not from cowardice, but because again she remembers Tarleton's request and her promise; so she is silent, and, after waiting for an instant, Mr. Lawrence continues:

"Under these circumstances, I see that it is best you should go with Miss Brooke—for the winter at least. Such a necessity cannot be harder to you than to me; but it is the right thing, and, therefore, hard or not, it must be done."

"Oh, uncle!" says Kate. She says no more, but those two words are eloquent enough, with two large tears in her eyes to stand for exclamation points.

Mr. Lawrence feels that it is imperative for him to get away before these tears give place to others. He gathers up his letters hastily and rises. "It must be!" he says. "I cannot keep you here with such an affair on hand. My bonny Kate, the sunlight will go out of the house when you leave it, but we must do what is right at any cost." He hesitates an instant, then adds, "I will speak to Miss Brooke," and leaves the room.

Kate looks woe-begone enough for a tragic muse, as she sits for some time staring vacantly at a picture on the wall; but after a short interval rays of comfort begin to dawn upon her. Tarleton has said that in a few days he will be in a position to speak openly, so that, after all, her uncle's fulmination with regard to Miss Brooke may prove empty air. Besides, even if the worst comes—if she is forced to go away—she still, as Tarleton has asserted, "belongs to him," and he will assuredly be no laggard in claiming his own.

When Miss Vaughn hears the story of her brother's failure, she is at first incredulous and then indignant.

"To think of her refusing you!" she says. "It is very plain what influence is at work. Randal Lawrence hinted as much to me a few days ago, but I felt no certainty until this morning. Now, I know that he was right."

"I knew it, too," says Mr. Vaughn. "Her face showed it very plainly when I pressed her closely for a reason. I am afraid your spells are losing their power, Florida."

She comprehends his meaning, and the peach-bloom tint on her cheek deepens. "You don't understand, that so far as he is concerned, this flirtation is for my benefit," she says. "The girl, however, I have no doubt, thinks him in earnest."

"And you have no means of undeceiving her?"

"Perhaps—if it were worth while to do so."

"It is certainly worth while. If you prove to her that Tarleton is merely trifling, she has pride enough to make her turn in the manner I desire."

His sister looks at him curiously. "And would you desire her to accept you for such a reason?"

"This is not a matter of sentiment," he answers, carelessly. "She is Mr. Ashton's nearest relation, and probable heir. There is no reliance to be placed on his assurances regarding myself as matters stand at present; but if I married his niece, I might rely on them."

"I will do my best for you," she answers; "but you must be patient. I must have an excuse to speak to her. Will Frank Tarleton be here to-night?"

"No; he has business connected with the races to detain him in Arlingford."

"Wait, then, until to-morrow. Let me observe them together, and I shall know better what to do."

(To be continued.)

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC.

It takes a great actor to support Fanny Davidson when she faints.

KATE CLAXTON is now performing to a very small audience. It is a girl.

RUBENSTEIN is to write the music of a comic opera to a libretto by Feis.

THE anniversary of Auber's birth was celebrated in Paris both on Sunday and Monday, January 22nd and 23rd.

A PLAY called "Pietà Flat" has been secured by Mrs. and Mrs. McKen Rankin, and will probably be produced by them in Boston.

It is announced that the success of the Drury Lane pantomime this year is such as to preclude the necessity for the contemplated revival of *Youth or The World*. *Robinson Crusoe* will be kept running until the time comes for the spring season here of German opera.

The WALKER HOUSE, Toronto.

This popular new hotel is provided with all modern improvements; has 125 bedrooms, commodious parlours, public and private dining-rooms, sample rooms, and passenger elevator.

The dining-rooms will comfortably seat 200 guests, and the bill of fare is acknowledged to be unexcelled, being furnished with all the delicacies of the season.

The location is convenient to the principal railway stations, steamboat wharves, leading wholesale houses and Parliament Buildings. This hotel commands a fine view of Toronto Bay and Lake Ontario, rendering it a pleasant resort for tourists and travellers at all seasons.

Terms for board \$2.00 per day. Special arrangements made with families and parties remaining one week or more.