

before. This was the nearest approach to work the young lady was ever guilty of.

If Roland Ashton had thought Marcia beautiful before, he thought her doubly so now, with the rippling masses of pale-brown hair gathered in a knot low down on her white neck, the slender figure clad in the dark-brown print dress which Mrs. Austin considered a proper morning costume, the sleeves rolled high above the elbows, displaying the round, white arms. And what pretty arms they were!—so smooth, so white, with the blue veins showing so clearly.

"I will win that girl yet," he said to himself, "in spite of the old ogre of an aunt."

A vivid blush rose even to Marcia's white forehead as she saw who the visitor was, and she gave a quick, frightened look at her aunt before she returned his "Good-morning."

The young man saw plainly that it was not the time for him to make a formal call, and he laid the books on the table near her, after bowing politely to Mrs. Austin, and said:

"I came in to give you the books I spoke of, and to say how sorry I am that you cannot accompany me to the picnic."

The young lady did not seem to notice the latter part of the sentence; but answered, quickly:

"Thank you very much for bringing them, Mr. Ashton."

"I was very glad to do so," was Mr. Ashton's reply; "and I hope you will enjoy reading them."

Then, with a low bow to each of the three ladies, he left the house.

Mrs. Austin's knitting-needles clicked viciously; and when the sound of retreating footsteps died away, she turned to her niece.

"That's a dreadful polite gentleman, isn't he? I should like to know how you got to be so well acquainted with him."

Marcia made no answer; so her kind relative went on:

"Do you hear me, Marcia Wheeler?"

"I am not very well acquainted with Mr. Ashton. I saw him last night on my way home from Riverton, and he offered to lend me the books."

"And he asked you to go to the picnic, too, didn't he? Well, I never saw much going on in my young days," continued Mrs. Austin, while the gray sock lengthened rapidly, for Mrs. Austin's knitting was like her temper—very quick.

Long before night Marcia wished that Mr. Ashton had been anywhere, except on the way from Riverton, the preceding evening. She went to bed, worn out with the continued fault-finding, added to physical weariness.

The next morning was bright and clear—the very day for a picnic. Marcia's first thoughts on awakening were far from pleasant. Why was it thus? Why could not she go as well as Jane? It was not fair nor right. She was younger than Jane, and she had so few pleasures.

What happiness it would be to drive along the winding road that encircled the foot of the grand old mountain, to the little lake, resting like a gem among the hills beyond.

Her first care, however, was to have everything in readiness for her delicate cousin. She it was who brushed and banded the helpless Jane's fair hair, and fastened the dainty knot of blue ribbon therein; helped to arrange the dress of pale-blue de laine the young lady had selected for the warm October day. Her hands, also, picked the luncheon-basket, and prepared early breakfast for her cousin. All this she did with a choking sense of injustice. She said to herself, over and over again: "It is not fair; I ought to be allowed to go. And to think it's carpet-rag carpets!"

In the midst of it all, she wondered if Mr. Ashton would go to the picnic.

After Mrs. Austin had safely started, in company with her escort, the young doctor from Riverton, Mrs. Austin brought all the powers of her mind to bear on the carpet-rag question. Numerous—I had almost said numberless—skeins were hanging in the old garret: some to be dyed yellow, some blue, some green, and others bark and tan colours. He had decided on coloring enough for and thirty yards of carpeting on this glorious autumn day, and of course Marcia must help. The girl had got her living to earn, and it wouldn't do for her to think she must be treated like Jane.

So Marcia obediently obeyed her aunt's directions. She dipped great skeins of raws in warm water; she wrung them out and placed them in the huge brass kettle, to scald or boil, as the different cases required; and she washed them in strong soap-suds or clear water, which Mrs. Austin ordered. Her head ached badly, but Mrs. Austin did not believe in headaches (her head never ached), and so the tiresome work went on. The board fence at the back of the orchard showed dozens of skeins of many-coloured rags, and still there were dozens more to dye.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, however, Marcia's strength failed, and she tottered, and so nearly fell to the floor, that Mrs. Ashton showed the innate kindness of her heart, by exclaiming: "I want to know if you ain't beat out? What's the matter with you?"

"My head aches dreadfully, but I think it is the green dye that makes me so faint. May I go out of doors for a little while?"

"I suppose you'll have to if you are going to look like that," answered motherly Mrs. Austin, adding "Maybe you'll meet Mr. Ashton again, if you walk towards Riverton."

The poor child's face flushed at the unkind taunt; but she answered, slowly:

"I am not going towards Riverton at all. I am going up to the orchard."

"Well, I don't care which way you go, only put a shawl around you, or you'll catch cold, after washing those rags out of the hot soap-suds."

So Marcia threw an old shawl around her slender shoulder, took down the heavy coil of hair to ease her throbbing head, and walked slowly towards the woods.

"After all, I am going to have a picnic in the woods, all to myself, too," she thought, bitterly. "I can do as I used to, when I was a little girl, make believe I am

rich, and beautiful, and happy. Oh, dear! oh, dear! how wretched I am!"

She felt an odd sense of suffocation in her throat; and when she reached the friendly shelter of the trees, she leaned against one of the old mossy trunks, and sobbed aloud.

Roland Ashton did not go to the picnic; and it so happened that afternoon he had decided to shorten the distance between his home and Riverton by crossing the fields; and Mrs. Austin's orchard was in his direct line of march. So, he saw the childish figure in the old gray shawl, with the beautiful hair falling loosely around the little shoulders, and heard the heavy sobs. It touched his heart inexpressibly. "Poor, poor child!" he said to himself.

Marcia heard the slight rustle in the first fallen leaves, and looking up, saw the dark eyes looking down upon her, with grave and tender interest. She drew her shawl closer around her, and was moving by him without a word, when he stretched forth a detaining hand:

"Excuse me, Miss Wheeler, but do not go away now. Are you ill? You look so pale."

She made an effort to answer him, but her self-command was all gone; her lips trembled like a griefed child's, and she could not speak.

"Sit down on this old log for a few minutes," he said, gently, "till you are a little rested."

Poor tired Marcia, her strength seemed to have deserted her, and she sat down.

Roland Ashton would have given much to have sheltered her in his loving arms, but of course that was impossible; so he stood near, looking fondly on the fair young head bent down before him, waiting for her to speak. It was some time before she did so, and then it was with evident effort:

"I do not know what you will think of me, Mr. Ashton, but I thought no one was near, and I am tired, and my head aches, and—I cannot help crying."

Roland Ashton sat down on the moss-covered log beside her, thinking to himself:

"Now is my time, if ever, for that old aunt guards her like the dragon-guarded apples of the Hesperides. I would have spoken the other day when we were alone, but I feared to frighten her. Yet if I let this chance slip, I may never get one again. Poor, dear girl! If she will only listen to me—only let me free her from her slavery."

Here he gradually approached the subject nearest to his heart. With what tact, and feeling, and earnestness he spoke at last need not be told. Suffice it to say that he asked Marcia to be his wife, to ling her how he had been attracted to her from the first.

"I used to laugh at love at first sight," he said; "but I do so no longer; for, from the hour I saw you in church, I felt that you, and you alone, could make me happy. I see I startle you. But I seek in vain to meet you. You rarely go out with your cousin, and I must speak now—I must seize my opportunity, even if I seem to speak on too short acquaintance. Forgive me, and place it to the account of my love."

Marcia covered her face with her hands.

"Oh! no, no," she cried; "it would be wicked. Think what I am. I have nothing in common with the ladies you—"

Roland Ashton intercepted her.

"If that is all you have to say, we will imagine it said and answered." And he managed to obtain possession of the restless little hands and held them fast in his own, while he went on, quietly: "If you can raise your thoughtful eyes to mine and say the words, 'I cannot be your wife, Roland Ashton, because I can never love you,' I will take that for an answer, and go away, and leave you. Can you say them?"

The girl raised her eyes once, twice, to the face so near her own, and tried to speak; but no sound came from her lips.

The young man, still looking at the shy, sweet face, said once more, with infinite tenderness in his voice:

"Can you say those words, Marcia?"

Poor lonely girl! she looked at him, and shook her head.

A grave smile dawned on his face.

"Then you shall be my wife!" he cried, masterfully, and did the only thing possible for him to do—took the little figure, in the shabby print dress, in his arms, and drew her close to him, whispering sweet words of love and comfort while he softly stroked the beautiful hair, and pressed kiss after kiss on the white eyelids, the cheeks, so brightly flushed now, and the quivering little lips.

And Marcia—she who had thought so bitterly, a little while ago, of the old childish play of "making believe" she was beautiful, and rich, and happy—was she not all these, and much more? Was she not beloved? In her innocence and perfect trust, she rested in her lover's arms, without a shadow to mar her perfect happiness, till the thought of Aunt Austin came to her, and she started up, exclaiming:

"I must go home. Aunt will be so angry."

It was of no use to try and detain her after that; and as the young man folded the worn, gray shawl around her, he said:

"You are my promised now" stepping to emphasize the short sentence after the manner of lovers; "and I am going home with you to tell Aunt Austin."

And he laughed a little at the thought of his future relative.

"Why need you tell her to-night?" asked Marcia, frightened at the very thought of such a thing. "You have no idea how angry she will be, and she will talk dreadfully to me."

"No, she will not, my darling; for when we reach the house, I want you to go upstairs to your own room, and let me speak with her alone, will you?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Marcia, quickly. "I shall be only too glad to be out of her sight."

Marcia never knew what passed between her aunt and her lover on that memorable evening; but half an hour after her return to the house, she heard her aunt's shrill voice at the foot of the stairs, calling:

"Marcia!"

When she answered, the elder lady vouchsafed to say:

"Come down, now. Mr. Ashton wants to say good-night to you."

Marcia thought her lover looked a little pale in the early twilight; but as he placed his arm around her in the shady porch, he said, tenderly:

"Our marriage will take place one month from to-day, my darling. Your aunt has given her consent, and I foresee we are to be the best of friends."

"Was she angry?" whispered Marcia.

"I think she was a little upset at first; but it is all over now. I am sorry I must say good-night to you so soon; but I promised to be at Riverton by six o'clock, and it is past that time already."

"Good-night, Mr. Ashton."

"I must stop long enough, however, to teach you to say good-night to me properly," he said, in a very sober tone. "You must try again now, and see if you cannot do better."

The girl understood in a moment, and a half-smile flitted across the downcast, blushing face, as the sweet voice said, very softly:

"Good-night, Roland."

The strong arm tightened around her, and with a hurried embrace, and a "Good-night, my own darling!" her lover parted from her.

Of all the happy days Marcia Ashton treasures in her memory, there is not one so brightly prized as that beautiful October day, so sorrowfully begun, so happily ended—THE DAY OF THE PICNIC.

Churn Slowly.

A little maid in the morning sun

Stood merrily singing and churning,—

"Oh! how I wish this butter was done,

Then off to the fields I'd be turning!"

So she hurried the dasher up and down,

Till the farmer called with half-made frown,

"Churn slowly!"

"Don't ply the churn so fast, my dear,

It is not good for the butter.

And will make your arms ache, too, I fear,

And put you all in a flutter—

For this is a rule wherever we turn,

Don't be in haste, whenever you churn—

Churn slowly!

"If you want your butter to come nice and sweet

Don't churn with a nervous jerking,

But ply the dasher slowly and neat—

You'll hardly know that your working;

And when the butter has come you'll say,

'Yes, this is surely the better way'—

Churn slowly!

Now, all you folks, do you think that you

A lesson can find in butter?

Don't be in haste, whatever you do,

Or get yourself in a flutter;

And while you stand at life's great churn,

Let the farmer's words to you return,—

Churn slowly!

A Fact.

Two persons were born at the same place, at

the same moment of time. After an age of

fifty years they both died, also at the same

place and at the same instant—yet one had

lived one hundred days more than the other.

How was this possible? Not to keep our

friends in suspense, the solution turns on a

curious—but, with a little reflection, a very

obvious—point in circumnavigation. A person

going around the world towards the west loses

a day, and towards the east he gains one.

Supposing, then, two persons are born together

at the Cape of Good Hope, whence a voyage

around the world may be performed in a year;

if one performs this constantly towards the

west, in fifty years he will be fifty days behind

the stationary inhabitants; and if the other

sails equally towards the east, he will be fifty

days in advance of them. One, therefore, will

have seen one hundred days more than the

other, though they were born and died in the

same place and at the same moment, and even

lived continually in the same latitude, and

reckoned time by the same calendar.