

Mr. Hobday did not go quite so far as that, but he very often wished himself back in the City. Perhaps he had never in his life welcomed a visitor so cordially as he did one, Mr. Staveley, who broke through the tacit agreement entered into by the landed gentry, and came up to the new red-brick house one day to call upon its lonely inmate. Staveley was unmarried, so that, perhaps, his recognition was neither so compromising to himself nor so complimentary to the Hobdays as that of others among the neighbors would have been. He was also an idle man, to whom new types of humanity were an amusing study. He had never seen any one at all like Mr. Hobday, and when he came upon the latter, one market-day, haranguing a group of astonished farmers in front of the Flying Horse upon the beauties of peasant proprietorship, he thought he should like to make his acquaintance. The acquaintance, once made, ripened into something not unlike friendship. If Mr. Staveley had any political opinions he kept them in the background. He listened to Mr. Hobday's disquisitions with the most unfeigned entertainment, and, by dint of abstaining from comments, gradually gained that ascendancy over his companion which a reticent man generally does gain over a garrulous one. Mr. Hobday used to say that Staveley was a clever fellow, though you mightn't think it to look at him; he'd almost as soon have Staveley's opinion upon any question of reason or common-sense as he would his own. If Staveley had not been considerably on the wrong side of forty and a confirmed bachelor, he might even have been inclined to think of him as a possible son-in-law.

But neither Mr. Staveley nor Josephine contemplated such an eventuality as that, although they soon became allies. He was interested in the pale, beautiful girl, the moral dulness of whose existence he half saw and half divined; while she, finding that this stranger spoke a language which she understood, learned to look anxiously for the sight of his round shoulders, his grizzled beard, and his good-humored, twinkling gray eyes. He had read a great deal, he appreciated her favorite poets; he knew something about art, and praised her water-color sketches rather more, perhaps, than he was justified in doing by the intrinsic merit of those performances. In him at least she found a fellow-creature who did not appear to think that politics and the heaping-up of riches were the only two subjects on earth worthy of a sensible man's attention. By degrees she was drawn to confide to him some of her perplexities and discouragements, and received in return a strong exhortation to patience. It was evident enough to Staveley that, with such a face and such a fortune, Miss Hobday would not be Miss Hobday long, but it may be doubted whether the matrimonial method of escape from perplexity and discouragement had as yet suggested itself to the young lady in question.

Destiny, which laughs at young ladies, philosophers, and retired grocers alike, decreed on a certain fine afternoon in the month of August, that Josephine should carry her melancholy musings into those woods skirting the Rye Court property of which mention has already been made; and, further, that, while pacing with slow, listless steps beneath the shade of beech and oak, she should suddenly become aware of a landscape painter busily plying his vocation in her immediate vicinity. He had pitched his camp-stool as close as possible to the boundary of the Hobday estate, towards which his back was turned, and from which a long bank, surmounted by a wooden paling, separated him. It has already been said that Josephine was interested in matters pertaining to the pictorial art. She drew noiselessly to the fence, and, leaning over it, placed herself in a line with the unconscious stranger. Some twenty or thirty yards away was a spreading lime-tree, beneath which a herd of Lord Rye's fallow-deer were shaking their heads and whisking their stumpy tails; and to the right of this, beyond the undulations of a well-timbered park, could be discerned a corner of the old Elizabethan mansion, which had been shut up ever since the arrival of the Hobdays in those parts. It was apparently this scrap of nature and architecture that the young man (his back was that of a young man) was transferring to his canvass, and he could not, of course, be aware that by simply looking over his shoulder he might see something a great deal more beautiful than a herd of deer and a glimpse of mullioned windows. For quite five minutes Josephine stood there watching him, and, as her eyes were remarkably good, she was able to admire the ease and dexterity of his handiwork; but at length, having occasion to relight his pipe, he faced about abruptly, and revealed himself as a good-looking young fellow of five or six and twenty, with a fair mustache, a short, pointed beard, and a pair of blue eyes, which opened very wide on discerning the fair critic beyond the fence.

So surprised was he that he dropped his pipe and his match, and ejaculated, "Hullo!"—which seemed to render it necessary that Josephine should make some apology. She did so without any foolish embarrassment. "I am afraid I startled you," she said.

"Well," answered the young man, taking off his hat and laughing a little, "I must confess that you did. Miss Hobday, is it not?" Josephine inclined her head.

"Ah, then we are neighbors, and we ought to know each other. Have you been standing there long?"

Only a few minutes," answered Josephine, smiling half involuntarily in response to the sunny, good humored face which was turned up towards her. "I am rather fond of sketching," she added, explanatorily, "and watching you was almost as good as taking a lesson. What a charming little peep one gets from here! And what a beautiful old house it is!"

"Oh, well," said the artist, "this wing of it isn't bad; but it is anything but a perfect house, you know. I believe two thirds of it ought to be pulled down and restored after the original design, if one only had money enough to do it. Of course I like it as it is, though, for the sake of association, and because it was the home of one's boyhood, and all that."

(To be continued.)

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POST OFFICE.

HALIFAX, N. S., 25th Nov., 1885.

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