

"The writer, Rufus Potter, the young clergyman at Morton," continued the old man, glancing over the signature at the bottom. "Ha! Julia, child, what does this mean? I know of no reason why *he* should have honored me with an epistle. I have never before reckoned him among my correspondents. Sit down here upon my knee, child, as you used to do long ago, until I have found out its contents. Don't blush so, like a half guilty thing. I suspect, from your confusion, that you know what the author wants even before his letter is read."

The girl sank down, as desired, upon her sire's lap. The old man read the letter carefully from top to bottom.

"And so, Julia," he said, as he folded it, "you have a lover—one, too, as poor as a church-mouse. I am sorry young people will set aside common sense and be romantic. But they will. It's natural. When I was a young fellow, like Potter, I fell into the same error—courted a girl for her beauty—afterwards loved her for her merit, and married her because I loved her, and the consequence was, that I have scratched a poor man's head ever since. Had I acted more rationally, I might have been as rich as your uncle Peter is now."

"And perhaps as miserable," added the girl, archly.

"Perhaps as miserable," repeated the old man—"that's a fact, girl. Perhaps as miserable."

"You never regretted, I am sure, sir, marrying my mother. You wept as if your heart were breaking on the day she died."

"True, true," said the old man, while a tear sprang from its cell at the mournful recollection. "She was a good woman, Julie; a better one never trod this sin-cursed earth; but had I been richer, child, I might sometimes have made her happier."

"Would the riches without *her*, have made *you* happier, father?"

"No, child, I would not have cared for riches then."

Or would the riches without *you* have made *her* happier, father?"

"Well, child, I don't believe they would. She was an affectionate being, Julia. She clung to me in the darkest hour, and never murmured, if I could only stay with her. She had a true woman's heart."

"But a kind Providence had so arranged it that you could not possess each other and the riches, too. I can not see how you acted unwisely, father, in taking that which afforded you the greatest happiness."

"You reason like a girl in love, Julie—like a girl in love with a poor man. The world would teach you a different philosophy from that."

"But the philosophy of the world may be false," said the girl, "while mine is correct. It looks to me to be plain common sense reasoning. Why should we take a rock when it is bread we are hungering after? Simply because a bystander says that a *rock* is what we ought to take! I wot not."

"But who is this young fellow—this Rev. Rufus Potter, who comes to me now, begging for my only daughter—my pet lamb—my choicest treasure? Where did he come from? Do you know?"

"I know better where he is going," said the girl, glancing her beautiful hazel eyes upward, "and, father, I should like to go with him."

"Where is he going?" said the old man, not fully comprehending, at first, what she meant. "Has he been called away to a distant field, where there is the offer of a larger salary? Morton has not a very wealthy congregation."