



TABLECLOTH IN CRETONNE AND BRAID.

CHAPTER II.

SHIRLEY ELTON was gone, and the light had died out of Allison's days. All that was left her was the memory of the parting and his last kind words. He had spoken cheerfully in order to dispel her gloom, and when he had seen the tears she could not repress, he had stooped and kissed her, for nobody was nigh. Moreover, he had detached a little golden heart from his watch-chain and placing a tiny spray of forget-me-not gathered from the river's edge, within it, had put it in her hand—to keep for his sake.

"If I can ever be of service to you or your family, you have my address and know where I am to be found; do not hesitate to ask it. Good-bye, dear child."

That was a very different Allison the artist left behind to the girl she had been when he first came to Rivermead.

Then, she was an innocent, light-hearted girl, whose highest ambition had been to settle down contentedly in that cottage on the hills and make Dan Humphrey the happy man he expected to be.

Now, no careless merriment called the arch dimples of her cheeks into play. Her looks were sombre, her dark eyes heavy with the gloom of inward trouble, her thoughts a tangle of hot emotions, in which rebellion against the unkind fate which had made her what she was and seemed likely to keep her so, was strongest. She separated herself from the company of all who loved her, and passed hours in solitary wanderings and profitless communings with self in her own little chamber, answering unwillingly to any call upon her services.

Her mother was patient, but the ferryman grew angry and often launched into reproachful language.

Matters being in so unsatisfactory a condition, Carne and his wife took counsel together, and came to the conclusion that it would be advisable under the circumstances to hasten the wedding-day in the hope that Allison would come the more quickly to her right mind. The ferryman undertook a consultation on the subject with Dan and returned from his errand elated with success.

Dan was only too pleased that his marriage

should be hastened rather than delayed, as he had begun to fear might be the case. There would be one more lamb for him to tend, one, too, that he was longing to take into his strong arms and shelter in his bosom. He was oppressed, however, with a fear that the girl might be unwilling, but Carne combated this doubt with some amount of bluster.

"The girl must do as she's bid, or I'll know the reason why," he said. "She has been fashious enough of late, and 'tis time that this is ended and no more trouble made."

If the ferryman expected to find his daughter amenable when he made known the decision that had been arrived at, he was disappointed. Allison's face turned of an ashen white at the announcement, but she said nothing. Her eyes, however, flashed ominously and she set her lips tightly. The symptoms betokened mischief. Leaning carelessly against the open cottage door with head tilted back, she beat a tattoo upon the brick floor with one foot.

"Well, Ally?" questioned her mother gently.

"Have you nothing to say?" queried Carne, raising his voice.

"Only this," replied the girl without looking up, "that it's too soon. I promised for the autumn, and now you and—Dan have been laying your heads together to make me marry him at once, and I will not."

"Hoity-toity!" exclaimed her father roughly, "we give ourselves airs do we, and set ourselves agen lawful authority, but 'twon't do, my girl. Dan and me, we've made up our minds, so married you'll be and took good care on, come this day four weeks."

It was unwise to bring the shepherd's name forward. Allison's eyes blazed, she lifted her head proudly, and replied in defiant tones—

"I've made up my mind too, and I say I will not marry Dan Humphrey this day four weeks."

This said, she walked in stately fashion from the kitchen, went upstairs and shut herself into her own room.

Carne and his wife looked at each other in some dismay.

"Think she means it?" he asked of his wife presently.

think costs under 2s. the piece, and this you must lay over the edges in long lines across and across in lattice fashion. With tacking secure the places where they cross, and tack the braid down, so that you may sew it on the machine at each edge. You must do this perfectly evenly, without any wrinkles or tucks, or the effect will be spoiled. When finished, the cloth is bound round with braid, and decorated with a hanging tassel at each corner.

I think this is almost the cheapest tablecloth for either dining-room or drawing-room that can be made, as it does not cost more than five shillings when finished, and may cost less if you watch your opportunities at sales and pick up a remnant of saten or *cretonne* here and there. The oriental effect is very strong, and if seen for the first time it is impossible to discover of what it is made, without a careful examination.

Some workers embroider rows of coral stitch on the black braid in yellow, or silks of several colours. This makes it very effective, but increases the cost and trouble of making. Rows of herring-boning in colour also look well, and the machine-stitching may be done with yellow silk.

"Aye, she means it—just now," said the mother, resuming her darning with nervous fingers. "Ally is wilful. When she takes a notion in her head it's like to stick there. You didn't do a clever thing, father, to bring Dan's name into the business. Any girl of spirit would mislike to hear that her lover had fixed the day for marrying without consulting of her."

The ferryman was ill-pleased to be put in the wrong and unwilling to admit that he had made a mistake, wherefore he worked himself into a rage, brought his big fist down upon the table with a bang, and swore that the thing should be as he willed, that he had done the fixing, and what was the good of being a father if he was not to be obeyed.

The logic was unanswerable, and like a wise woman Mrs. Carne held her tongue; but by-and-by she crept upstairs softly to try what a mother's gentle powers would do to bring Allison to reason, but as she was not admitted and could extract no answer, she was forced, unwillingly, to give up the attempt.

That night, Allison slept not at all. She was planning how to escape from what was threatening, and at length conceived the wildest scheme in her disordered brain. The execution of it seemed simple enough to her, and before morning she had begun to carry it out.

While father and mother were wrapped in peaceful slumbers, she made her slight preparations and stole noiselessly out of the house. In her purse she carried all the money she had earned as the artist's model; round her throat, suspended by a ribbon, was hung the precious golden heart, and folded carefully, for safety, an address written upon a leaf torn out of Shirley Elton's pocket-book.

When Carne and his wife descended that morning and found none of Allison's usual duties fulfilled, nor herself anywhere to be seen, they stood bewildered.

"She has overslept herself," said the mother, and ran upstairs to her daughter's room. She found it empty. The bed had not been slept in, and pinned to the coverlet was a scrap of paper on which a few hasty lines had been scrawled. With difficulty, in her agitation, Mrs. Carne at length deciphered their meaning. The purport of the message