QUEENIE HETHERTON.

By Mrs. Mary J. Holmes, author of "Tempest and Sunshine," "Ethelyn's Mistake," "Forrest House," etc.

CHAPTER X.

THE TWO REINETTES.

"Oh, how lovely it is!" she cried, as she entered the room and took it all in as rapidly as Phil himself could have done. "What perfect taste Mr. Beresford must have!" she continued. "It is just as I would have except the blue ribbons, which do not suit my black face. But I can soon change them, and then everything will be faultless; and—oh—oh—the cats!" she screamed, as she caught sight of Mrs. Speckle, who, with her three children, was purring contentedly in the cushioned armchair by the window. "Cats! and I love them so much; he has remembered everything!" and bounding across the floor, Reinette knelt by the chair and buried her face in the soft fur of the kittens, who, true to their feline instincts, recognized in her a friend, and began at once to play with her flowing curls, and pat her neck and ears with their velvety paws, while Mrs. Speckle, feeling a little crowded, vacated the chair and seated herself upon the window-stool, where Phil saw her when he rode by.

The sight of the cats carried Reinette back to the day when her father had written his directions to Mr. Beresford and she had made suggestions. How careful she had been to remember all her likes and dislikes, and how pale and tired he had looked after the letter was finished, and how unjust and thoughtless she had been to feel aggrieved because he said he was not able to drive with her in the Bois de Boulogne after dinner was over. And now he was dead, and she was alone in a strange, new world, with only Mr. Beresford for a friend, unless it were those people who claimed her—those people of whom she had never heard, and against whom she rebelled with all the strong force of her imperious nature. She had not had time to consider the matter seriously; but now alone in her own room, with the door shut between her and the outside world, it rose before her in all its magnitude, and for a time drove every other feeling from her. The proud aristocratic part of her nature was in the ascendant, and battled fiercely against her better self.

It was not possible, she thought, that these people—that loud-voiced old lady, who used such dreadful grammar and called her Reinet, and the Aunt Lyddy Ann, who looked like a bar-maid, and the tall showily dressed Anna, with the yellow plume, the cheap lace scarf, and the loud hat, such as only the common girls of Paris wear—were really the relatives of her beautiful mother, who she had always supposed was an English woman, and whom she had cherished in her heart as everything that was pure, and lovely, and refined. Her father had said of her once:

"I never knew Mrs. Hetherton" (he always called her thus) "to be guilty of a single unlady-like act, and I should be glad, my daughter, if you were half as gentle and gracious of manner as she was."

It is true she had never been able to learn anything definite of her mother's family, for her father, when questioned, had either answered evasively, or not at all. Once he had said to her, decidedly:

"There are reasons why I do not care to talk of your mother's family and it is quite as well that you remain in ignorance. Mrs. Hetherton was everything that a perfect lady should be. You must be satisfied with that, and never trouble me again about your mother's antecedents."

He had seemed very much excited, and there was a strange look on his face, as he walked the *salon* rapidly, which frightened Reinette a little; and still she persisted so far as to say:

"I am sure mother was an Englishwoman, by her picture."

"Be satisfied then that you know so much, and don't seek for more knowledge. Whatever her friends were, they are nothing to me; they can be nothing to you. So never mention them again."

And she never did; but she almost worshipped the beautiful face, which had been painted on ivory in Paris when her mother was a bride and had rooms at the Hotel Meurice. It was a fair, lovely face, with hair of golden brown, and great tender eyes of lustrous blue, with a tinge of sadness in them, as there was also in the expression around the sweet mouth just breaking into a smile. The dress was of heavy, creamy satin, with pearls upon the snowy neck and arms, and on the wavy hair. A high-bred, aristocratic face, Reinette thought, and in spite of her father's evident dislike of her mother's friends, she never for an instant had thought of them as other than fully her equals in position and social standing. Probably there had been some quarrel which had resulted in lasting enmity, or her mother might have been the daughter of some nobleman, and eloped with the young American, thus incurring the lifelong displeasure of her family. This last was Reinette's pet theory, and she had more than once resolved that when she was her own mistress she would seek her mother's friends, never doubting that she would find them, if not dukes and duchesses, fully equal to the Hethertons, who, her father said, had in their veins the best blood of New and Old England both.

Everything pertaining to her mother was guarded by Reinette with great fidelity, and in the box where her favoritie treasures were hidden away was a long, bright tress of hair and a few faded flowers, tied together with a bit of blue ribbon, to which was attached a piece of paper, with the words, "My mother's hair, cut from her head after she was dead, and some of the flowers she held in her hands when she lay in her coffin."

"Among Reinette's books there was also an old copy of "The Lady of the Lake," on the fly-leaf of which was written in a very pretty hand, "Margaret. From her sister Mary. Christmas, 18—." This was the only link between herself and her mother's family which Reinette possessed, and she guarded it religiously, building upon it a multitude of theories with regard to the Aunt Mary whom she meant some time to find, and whom she always saw clad in velvet, and jewels, and old lace, and possibly with a coronet on her brow.

Such were Reinette's ideas of her mother's friends, which her father had suffered her to cherish, only smiling faintly at some of her extravagant speculations, but never contradicting them. And now, in place of dukes and duchesses, or, at least, of lords, and ladies, and Englishmen of ability, to have these people thrust upon her, this grandmother, and aunt, and cousin, with unmistakable marks of vulgarity stamped upon them, was too much, and for a time the proud active girl rebelled against it with all the fierceness of her nature, while, mingled with her bitter humiliation, was another, a better and deeper feeling, which hurt her far more than the mortification of knowing that she was not what she believed herself to be. Her father, whom she had so loved, and honored, and believed in, had not dealt fairly with her.

Why had he not told her the truth, especially after he knew they were coming to America, and that she must certainly know it for some time.

"If he had told me, if he had said a kind word of them, I should have been prepared for it and loved them just because they were mother's people. Oh, father, whatever your motive may have been, you did me a grievous wrong," she said, and into her eyes there crept a hard, strange look of resentment toward the father who had kept his secret from her.

Then, as her thoughts went backward to the little state-room where her father died, and the words he said to her, she cried out

"I understand now what he meant, what he tried to tell me, what I was to forgive if ever it came to me. He meant to have told me before, he said; he was sorry that he had not. Yes, father, I see. While we were in France there was no need for me to know, and when we started for America it was hard to confess it, to me, hard to destroy my beautiful air-castles filled with a line of ancestry nobler, better, even, than the Hethertons, and so you put it off, as you did anything unpleasant, as long as possible. You were going to tell me when we reached New York, you said, but before we were there you were dead, and I was left to meet it alone. Oh, father, I promised to forgive and love you just the same, and I will, I do—I do, but it's very, very hard on me and I must fight it out and cast the demon from me before I meet one of them again."

And in truth Reinette did seem to be fighting with some foe as she stood in the center of the room, her face as white as ashes, her tearless eyes flashing fire, and her hands beating the air more rapidly and fiercely than they had done when in the carriage her grandmother questioned her of her knowledge of her mother. That was a feeble effort compared to what she was doing now as she flew about the room striking out here and there as if at some tangible object, and sometimes clutching at the long curls floating over her shoulders. It was a singular sight and not strange at all that Mrs. Speckle, from her seat in the window, looked curiously on at the young girl acting more like a mad than sane woman, and the three kittens upon the floor, who, fancying all these gyrations were for their benefit, jumped, and scampered, and spit, and pulled at Reinett'e feet and dress in true feline delight.

Suddenly the door opened cautiously, and Pierre looked on saying softly:

"Please, Miss Reinette, wouldn't you come out of it quicker if you was to *shake me a bit*. I shouldn't mind it a spell, if you didn't use your nails, and would let my hair alone. There isn't much of it left you know!"

Pierre had not lived in his master's family fourteen years without understanding his mistress thoroughly, and that in his heart he worshipped her was proof that he had found far more good in her than bad. He knew just how kind, and loving, and self-sacrificing she was, and how she had cared for him when he had the fever in Rome, and her father was away in Palestine. In spite of the remonstrances of friends she had stood by him, night and day, for weeks, because he missed her when she was absent and called for her in his delirium. It did not matter that the gayeties of the carnival were in progress and that rare facilties were offered her for seeing them. She turned her back on them all and stayed by the sick old man who needed her, and who, the physicians said, owed his life to her nursing and constant care. Pierre had never forgotten it any more than he had forgotten the time when, in a fit of anger she had pounced upon his back like a little tiger-cat and scratched, and bit, and pulled his hair until he shook her off and held her till the *humeur*, as he called it, was over. Her father had punished her severely for that ebullition of temper, and she had never behaved so badly since, though she sometimes shook Pierre furiously, for by contact with some living thing which resisted her she could conquer herself more readily, she said; and when there was no one near whom she dared touch she sometimes gave vent to her excitement by whirling round in circles and beating the air with her hands. Pierre knew this peculiarity, and when he came to the door and heard the tempest within, he offered himself at once as a kind of breaker for the storm to beat against. But Reinette did not need him. The battle was nearly over, for at its height, when it seemed to her that she could not have it so—could not lose one grain of respect for her father for having thus deceived her—she could not exchange the ideal friends of her mother for these people so different from herself, there came suddenly before her mind a fair, handsome face, with eyes as tender and pitiful as those of a woman, and yet with something strong and masterful in their expression as they smiled a welcome upon her.

It was when she was most bewildered and confounded by the unknown relations claiming her that somebody had said, "This is another cousin;" but in her excitement she had scarcely heeded it, and made no response when the young man's hat was lifted politely from his head in way of a greeting.

It was the same young man, she was sure, who had held her back from the open grave, and spoken to her so kindly, in a voice which she recognized at once as belonging to her class. Reinette laid great stress upon the human voice, insisting that by it she could tell how much of real culture or natural, inborn refinement its owner possessed. The sharp, loud voices of the Fergusons, with their peculiar intonation, had grated upon her nerves, but the well-modulated, well-trained tones of the young man had fallen on her ear like a strain of music among jarring discords.

Who was he? Not the brother, surely of that tall blonde with the yellow plume and long lace scarf. That was impossible; and yet some one had said, "Here is another cousin," and he had acknowledged it with a smile, which came to her now like sunshine breaking through a rift of clouds and clearing up the sky.

"Oh! if he only were my cousin, I could bear it so much better," she thought, just as Pierre came in, offering himself as a sacrifice provided she spared his hair, of which he had so little.

The whole thing was so unexpected and droll that it quieted Reinette at once, and sitting down in a chair, she laughed and cried alternately for a moment; then dashing her tears away and taking the kittens upon her lap, she bade the old man sit down beside her, as there was something she wished to tell him—to ask him.

"Pierre," she began, "it was right nice in you to offer yourself a victim to my fury; and, had you come sooner, I might have shaken you a little, for when I'm fighting with my other self I always like to feel something in my power—something which stands for that other girl I'm trying to conquer, and I was half tempted to take one of these little kittens and wreak my temper on that, but I didn't, and I am glad, and am going to govern myself hereafter, for I must be a woman now and not a child."

"Yes, miss, that's very good," Pierre said, wondering how he should like his little mistress if she were always as mild and gentle as she seemed now, without any fire or spirit at all.

"Pierre," Reinette continued, "how long have you been with us?"

"Fourteen years come Christmas."

"I thought so; and did you know papa before you came to us?" she asked, and he replied:

"No, miss; only as I had heard of him as the rich American, who lived so extravagantly at the Hotel Meurice, and had such a handsome chateau in the country."

"Yes, Chateau des Fleurs. It was lovely, and I was so happy there. Then, of course, you never saw my mother."

"Never," said Pierre, and Reinette continued:

"And did you never hear anything of her from people, from strangers? Did you never hear where she came from, where papa found her?"

"I heard from you that she was very beautiful and good, and died at Rome when you were born, and I think you told me she was English. Surely you would know about your own mother;" and Pierre looked curiously at his young mistress, who colored painfully and beat the matting with her little boot.

Reinette was hesitating as to how much she would tell Pierre, for it hurt her to confess to any one how little she really knew of her mother's antecedents so wholly silent and non-committal had her father been on the subject. At last, deciding that she must be frank with Pierre if she wished him to be so with her, she said:

"Pierre you are all I have left of the life in France, and I must tell you everything. There was always a mystery about mamma which I could not solve, and all I know of her was her name, Margaret Ferguson, and that papa loved her very much, so much that he could not bear to talk of her, and all I know besides the name I guessed, and now I am afraid I did not guess right. I have never met anybody who had seen her but papa, except the nurse Christine Bodine, who was with her when she died, and who brought me to Paris. She, too, left me when I was a year or so old, and I have not seen her since, and it made father very angry if I ever spoke of her. She was not a nice woman, he said, and he did not wish me to mention her name. Do you know where she is? know anything of her?"

"What was the name please?" Pierre asked, and Reinette replied:

"Christine Bodine, and if living now she must be forty or more. Mother would be forty-three."

"I don't know where she is, and I never saw her," said Pierre; "but the name brings something to my mind. Years ago as much as a dozen or more, when we were staying at Chateau des Fleurs I went with monsieur to Paris to the office of Monsieur Colignie, a kind of broker or money agent in town, and your father gave him a note or check of 1,250 francs to be sent to Mademoiselle Christine Bodine. I remember the name perfectly, Christine Bodine, because it rhymed, and I said it to myself two or three times, but who she was or where she lived I didn't know; only master's face was very dark, and he was silent and gloomy all the day, and I thought maybe Mademoiselle Bodine was some woman to whom he had to pay money, whether he liked it or not. You know many fine gentleman do that."

He saw that she did not understood him, and though he might have told her that her father had not always been the spotless man which she believed him to be, he would not do it, preferring that she should be happy in he ignorance.

"I remember that day so well," he continued, because the emperor, and empress, and prince imperial were all driving through the streets, and your father remarked to a friend, who said something sneering of their majesties as if they were up-starts and not the real ties as if they were up-starts and not the real at all, that it pleased him to know that they were not born in their present high position, for it showed that democracy could rise to the top even in monarchical France. I remember, too, that he bought you a big wax doll in the Palais Royal, and although you were in bed when we returned to the chateau, he had you up to give it to you, and fondled and caressed you more than usual as if making up for something."

Reinette's eyes were full of tears at these reminiscences of Pierre's, but she forced them back, and said:

"Yes I have no idea where Christine is now?"

"None whatever, but I think monsieur heard from her or of her when we were in Liverpool waiting to sail. You remember that several letters were forwarded to him, and one excited him very much. I was in the room when he read it, and heard him say something in English which I think was a swear, and I know he said 'that accursed Christine,' for I understood that plain. He was very white and weak all day, and that night asked you if you would feel very badly to turn back to Paris and not go to America after all. You remember it, don't you?"

Reinette did remember it, though at the time she had laid little or no stress upon it, thinking it a mere idle remark, as her father was naturally changeable. Now she could recall how sick and sad he had looked, and how much he had talked of France, and she could see, or thought she could, that had she been willing, he would have gone back too gladly.

He had written several letters that night and posted them himself, and the next morning they had gone on board the Russia, and he had taken to his bed at once and died before they reached New York.

Was it homesickness which had hastened his death, or was there something in that letter which Pierre said had troubled him and made him swear? She could not tell, and with her frank, open nature, and great love for her father, was far from suspecting any wrong-doing in him which had followed him even across the sea.

Surely there could have been nothing between him and her nurse, Christine, which should make him curse her. Pierre did not understand English well; it was easy for him to blunder, though he had not done so in the name "Christine Bodine" to whom her father had sent money. Why had he done so, and where was Christine now? She had known her mother, and Reinette meant to find her it it should cost her half her fortune.

Turning to Pierre, she said:

"This money agent, this Polignie, is still in Paris?"

"Yes, miss, I think so."

"And you know his address?"

"I know where we went that day your father paid the money, but he may have moved since many times."

"No matter. He must be well known; a letter will find him, and I shall write and ask for this woman, Christine Bodine, for I mean to find her if I cross the ocean to do it. She knew mother, and I must know something of her, too, for—oh, Pierre, my brain is all in a whirl with what has happened to-day; but I can't tell you in here, I feel so smothered when I think of it. Let's go to that ledge of rocks yonder on the hill-side. We must see the sun set from there, and maybe we can see poor papa's grave."

She put on her hat and preceded Pierre down the stairs and through the dining-room, where she found Mrs. Jerry arranging a very dainty-looking tea-table, with silver and glass, and decorated china, with a basket of white lilies in in the center

Supper would be ready very soon Mrs. Jerry said, suggesting that her young mistress wait till it was served, as the muffins would all be cold. Reinette was not hungry, she said, and Mrs. Jerry must eat the muffins herself. By and by she would perhaps have some toast and tea in her room; she would tell Mrs. Jerry when she wanted it, and she flashed upon the woman a smile so sweet and winning that it disarmed her at once of any resentment she might otherwise have felt because her nice supper was slighted and she must keep up the kitchen fire in order to have toast and tea whenever it should suit the young lady's fancy.

Meanwhile Reinette went on her way, through the back yard toward the ledge of rocks, when suddenly she heard a pitiful whine, and turning saw the dog tugging at his chain to get away. In an instant she was at his side, with her arms around his neck, while she cried:

"Look, Pierre, what a noble fellow he is! Why do they keep him tied up? I mean to set him free."

And she was about to do so, when the coachman, who was watching her, at a little distance called out:

"Miss Hetherton, you must not do that. He is strange here, and will run home. He has done so twice already."

"Who are you?" Reinette asked, rather haughtily, and he replied:

"I am Stevens and take care of the horses. Maybe you would like to see them; they are real beauties."

"Yes, when I unchain the dog," Reinette replied. "He'll not run from me; I can tame him. What's his name?"

"King," said Stevens; and taking the dog's face between his hands, and looking straight into its eyes, Reinette said;

Mr. Doggie, you are my King, and I am your queen. You must not run away from me. I'll take such good care of you, and love you so much; and in proof thereof I give you your liberty."

She slipped the chain from his neck, and with a joyful bark, King sprang upon her licking her face and hands in token of his hateful allegiance. Every brute recognized a friend in Reinette, and King was not an exception, and kept close to her side as she went toward the stables to see the horses, which Stevens led out for her inspection.

First, the splendid bays, Jupiter and Juno, with which she could find no fault, unless it were that Juno carried her head a trifle higher than Jupiter, and might be freer in the harness. She could not quite decide until she saw them on the road, she said; and then she turned to the milk-white steed, her saddle pony, with which she was perfectly delighted; she was so white and clean, and tall and gentle, and ate grass from her hand and followed her about as readily as King himself.

"What's her name?" she asked.

And ou Stevens replying that he did not know, she said:

"Then she shall be Margery, after the dearest friend I ever had except papa. She was so fair, and beautiful, and tall, and I loved her so much. Oh, Margery?" she continued, laying her hand upon the neck of her steed; "where are you now, and do you know how sad and lonely your little Queenie is?"

There was a shadow on Reinette's bright face, but it quickly passed away; and sending the horses back to their stalls, she went, with Pierre and King, toward the ledge of rocks on the grassy hill-side.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE ROCKS.

It was very pleasant on the ledge of rocks, with the soft, rose-tinted glow of the summer sunset in the western sky, and the long line of wooded hills and grassy meadows stretching away to north, and south, and east, as far as the eye could reach. Through a deep cut to the westward a train of cars was coming swiftly into view, while over the tops of the pine trees to the east wreaths of smoke were curling, heralding the approach of another train, for Merrivale was on the great thoroughfare between Boston and Albany. At the foot of the hill the waters of Lake Petit lay like a bit of silvery moonlight amid the green fields around it, while further to the left another lake or pond was seen, with the Chicopee winding its slow course through strips of meadow land and green pastures, where the cows fed through the day, and from which there now came a faint tinkle of bells, as they were driven slowly home. Everything was quiet, and calm, and peaceful, and Reinette felt quiet, and peaceful, too, as she seated herself in the "Lady's Chair" and scanned the lovely landscape spread out below her.

"America is beautiful," she said to Pierre, who stood at her side; "beautiful and fair as Switzerland itself—the play-ground of Europe—and I should be so happy in papa's old home, if only he were here. And I mean to be happy, as it is, for I know he would wish it to be so, and I understand now what he meant when he said such strange things to me just before he died. He was preparing me for a surprise—a—a—Pierre" and, forcing down a great sob, Reinette began rapidly. "Pierre, did you notice those people—those ladies, I mean, who came to meet me at the station?"

"Yes," said Pierre; "they rode with you to the grave. I thought, maybe, they were the servants of the house; who were they, mademoiselle?"

"Servants?" and the dark eyes flashed angrily, for if they were hers—her flesh and blood—nobody must speak against them. "Servants! Pierre, you are an idiot!"

"Yes, mademoiselle," the old man answered, humbly, and Reinette continued:

"You don't yet understand how different everything is in America. There is no nobility here—no aristocracy like what we have in Europe. Your son, if you had one born here, might be the President, for all of his birth. It's worth and education which make nobility here, with, perhaps, a little bit of money, and Pierre, those ladies—mind you ladies—whom you thought servants, were my own grandmother, and aunt, and cousin—my mother's relatives."

"*Mon Dieu!*" dropped involuntarily from the old man's lips, as he looked searchingly at his mistress for an instant, and then dropped his eyes meekly as he met her threatening gaze.

"Yes, I do not quite know how it is, or why papa never told me of them; some family quarrel most likely," Reinette continued. "He tried to tell me when he was dying. He said there was something he must explain; something he ought to have told me, and this was it. My mother was American, not English, as I supposed, and these are her relatives and mine, and it's nice to find friends where one did not expect them."

"Yes, mademoiselle, very nice," Pierre said, with a nod of assent, though, knowing the proud little lady as he did, he knew perfectly well how hotly she was rebelling against these new friends, and how it was her pride which prompted her to exalt them in his estimation if possible.

But it was not for him to express any opinion, so he remained silent, while Reinette went on:

"Mother's own blood relations, who can tell me all about her, though I mean to find Christine Bodine just the same, and hear what she has to say of mamma. Pierre, there was another cousin at the station—a young man, with such a fair, winning face and perfect manners. He was at the grave, too. Did you see him? You must have seen him. He was a gentleman, I am sure."

"Yes, mademoiselle," and Pierre brightened at once. "He is quite the gentleman, the nobility, the aristocracy, like Monsieur Hetherton. He rode with Monsieur Beresford and myself, and spoke kind-like to me in my own tongue; not as you talk it, but fair, very fair, though he do not understand me so well."

Pierre was growing eloquent on the subject of Phil, and Reinette was greatly interested, and asked numberless questions concerning the young man whom Pierre so frequently declared a gentleman.

"What was his name? What did Mr Beresford call him, and what did he say?"

"He asked much of you," Pierre replied, "and once there was something like water in his eyes when I told him how sad you were, but seems like he was ashamed to have the other one see him, for he pulled his hat down over his eyes, and said something about it in English which made them both laugh, he and the other gentleman who call him Phil."

"Phil!" Reinette repeated. "What a name. You could not have understood."

But Pierre insisted that he did get was Phil, and nothing else, and as just then Phil himself rode by, the old man pointed him out to Reinette just after the bow, which she did not see, and consequently could not return; but she watched him as far as she could see him, admiring his figure, admiring his horse, and wondering how it could be that he was so different from those other people, as she mentally designated the Fergusons, of whom she could not think without a shiver, and whom, try as she would, she could not accept willingly as her mother's friends. If she could find Christine Bodine, who knew her mother, she could solve all doubts on the subject; and she meant to find her, if that were possible, and set herself about it at once—to-morrow, perhaps, for there was no time to be lost. If Christine had, as Pierre believed, been a pensioner of her father's, and if he had heard from her at Liverpool, then of course she was living, and through the Messrs. Polignie she could trace her, and perhaps bring her to America to live with her, as something to keep fresh in mind her past life, now so completely gone from her.

Thus thinking, she walked back to the house just as it was growing dark, and Mrs. Jerry was beginning to feel some anxiety with regard to the tea and toast, and the time they would be called for.

Reinette's long fast, and the fatigue and excitement of the day were beginning to tell upon her, and after forcing herself to swallow a few mouthfuls of the which the good woman pressed upon her announced her intention of retiring to her room.

Mrs. Jerry carried up the wax candles, which she lighted herself, and after setting them upon the table and seeing that everything was in order, she stood a moment, smoothing the hem of her white apron, as if there was something she had to say. She had promised Grandma Ferguson to call Reinette's attention to the patch-work spread quilted "herrin'-bone," and which, as the work of a young girl, had taken the prize at the Southbridge Fair, but she did not quite know how to do it. "Herrin'-bone" quilts did not seem to be in perfect accord with this little foreign girl, who, though so plainly dressed, and so friendly and gracious of manner, bore unmistakable marks of the highest grade of aristocracy. Like the most of her class, Mrs. Jerry held such people in great esteem, and as something quite different from herself, whose father had worked side by side many a day in plaster and mortar with Mrs. Jerry's honest John Ferguson, and she could not understand how one like Reinette Hetherton could care for a patch-work quilt, even if her mother had pieced it in years gone by. But she had promised, and must keep her word, and laying her hands upon it, and pulling it more distinctly into view, she began:

"I promised your grandmother to tell you about this bed quilt, which 'pears kind of out of place in here, but she sent it over—the old lady did—thinkin' you'd be pleased to know that your mother did it when she was a little girl, and that many of them is pieces of her own gowns she used to wear. I remember her myself with this one on; it was her Sunday frock, and she looked so pretty in it;" and Mrs. Jerry touched a spare of the blue and white checked calico which had once formed a part of Margaret Ferguson's best dress.

"I don't think I quite understand you," said Reinette, who was wholly ignorant of that strange fashion of cutting cloth in bits for the sake of sewing it up again.

But one idea was perfectly clear to her. Mrs. Jerry had seen her mother, and her great dark eyes were full of enquiry as she continued:

"You have seen mother; you knew her when she was a little girl; knew her for certain and sure?"

There was still a doubt—a rebelling in Reinette's mind against the new relatives, but Mrs. Jerry knew nothing of it, nor guessed that Reinette was not fully acquainted with all the particulars of her mother's early life and marriage.

"Yes," she answered, "Margaret Ferguson and I was about the same age; mabby I'm two years or so the oldest; but we went to school together and was in the same class, only she was always at the head and I mostly at the foot, and we picked huckleberries together many a time out in old General Hetherton's lot, never dreaming that she would one day marry Mr. Fred. I beg your pardon, your father I mean," she added, hastily, as she met the proud flash of Reinette's dark eyes, and understood that to speak of her father as Fred. was an indignity not to be tolerated.

But for this slip of the tongue Reinette might have questioned her further of her mother, but she could not do it now, though she returned to the bed quilt and managed to get a tolerably clear comprehension with regard to it.

"Made every stitch of it, and I warrant she pricked herself over it many a time," Mrs. Jerry said, and being fairly launched on her subject she was going on rapidly when Reinette suddenly interrupted her with:

"Yes, yes, I know; I see; mother did it. Mother's hands have touched it; and now go away; go away, please, quick, and leave me alone."

She pointed to the door, and Mrs. Jerry went swiftly out, half frightened at the look in the young girl's eyes, as she bade her leave the room.

"It is true; it must be true; everybody and everything confirm it, and I have lost my ideal mother," Reinette whispered as she closed the door after Mrs. Jerry.

Yes, she had lost her ideal mother, but the loss had not been without its gain—its compensation—and Reinette felt that this was so as she knelt in her anguish by the bedside and laid her hot, tear-stained cheek against the coarse fabric which had been her mother's work.

"Mother's dear hands have touched it," she said, "and that brings her so near to me that I almost feel as if she were here herself. "Oh, mother, did your hands ever touch your baby, or did you die before you saw me? Nobody ever told me. Why was father so silent, so proud? I would have loved these people for her sake, and I will love them now in time. But it is all so strange, and mother's girlhood was so different from what I have fancied it was."

Then remembering what Mrs. Jerry had said of the bits of calico, she brought the candles close to the bed and examined the pieces carefully, especially the blue and white one in which Mrs. Jerry had said her mother had looked so pretty. It was delicate in color and in pattern, but to Reinette, who had never in her life worn anything coarser than the fine French cambrics, it seemed too common a fabric for the picture she held in her heart of her mother. It did not at all match the lovely pearls she kept so sacred among her treasures. Her trunks and boxes had been brought from the station, and in one of them were the pearls.

Unlocking the box, Reinette took out the exquisite necklace, bracelets and ear-rings which her father had bought at a great price in Paris, and which he told her her mother had worn to a ball at the Tuileries, where she had been noted as the most beautiful woman present.

Reinette admired them greatly, and on the occasion of her first ball had begged her father to allow her to wear them, but he had refused, and seemed so disturbed and distressed that she had put them away, wondering why just the sight or mention of them affected him so strangely.

Taking them now to the bedside, she laid them upon the squares of blue and tried to picture to herself the beautiful woman in creamy white satin who had worn them and the girl who had picked berries with Mrs. Jerry, and worn the dress of blue.

"Pearls and calico! There's a great distance between them," she thought, "but not greater than the distance between my old life and the new, which I must live bravely and well."

Then, returning the pearls to their casket, with a feeling that now she could never wear them, she undressed herself rapidly, for her head was beginning to ache, and throwing herself upon the bed, drew the patch-work quilt over her, caressing it as if it had been a living thing, and whispering softly:

"Dear mother, I do not love you one whit the less because you once picked berries in father's fields and wore the cotton gown, and you seem near to me to-night, as if your arms were round me, and you were pitying your desolate little girl, who has nobody to pity her, nobody to love her, nobody to pray for her now, and she so wretched, and bad."

Poor little Reinette, she was mistaken when she thought there was no one to pity, no one to pray for her now, for across the river, over the hill, and under the poplar trees, a light was still burning in the chamber where Grandma Ferguson knelt in her short night-gown and wide-frilled cap, and prayed for the young girl, Margaret's child, that God would comfort her and have her in his keeping, and "make her love her mother's folks a little," while at the Knoll, in a larger and far more luxurious chamber, Phil was thinking of his cousin, and the great sad eyes which, though they had flashed only one look at him, haunted him so persistently, they were so full of pathos and pain.

"Poor little girl," he said, "alone in a new country, with such a lot of us whom she never heard of thrust upon her, I pity her, by Jove!"

CHAPTER XII.

REINETTE AND MR. BERESFORD.

Reinette slept heavily that first night in her new home—so heavily, that the robins had sung their first song, and the July sun had dried the dew-drops on the greensward and flowers before she awoke, with a very vague perception as to where she was, or what had happened to her. Through the window which she had left open came the warm summer air, sweet with the scent of clover and the newly mown hay, which a farmer's boy was turning briskly, not far from the house. And Reinette, who was keenly alive to everything fresh and beautiful, inhaled the delicious perfume and felt instinctively how much of freshness and beauty she was losing. But when she rose and, going to the window, threw back the shutters and looked for an instant at the lovely picture of the Merrivale hills and valleys spread out before her, a sharp, cutting pain across her forehead and in her eyes warned her that her old enemy, the nervous headache, was upon her in full force, and there was nothing for her that day but pain and suffering in the solitude of her room. Then, as she remembered what Mrs. Ferguson had said of an early visit for the sake of "talking over things," she shuddered, and grew cold and faint, and thought with that strange feeling of incredulity to which she clung:

"If I was only positive and sure, beyond a doubt, that mother did once pick huckleberries with Mrs. Jerry, and wear the cotton gown, I could bear everything so much better. Mr. Beresford knows all about it; he will tell me, and I must see him first, for those people will not be long in coming to pay their respects. I'll send Pierre immediately with a note asking him to come to me as soon as possible."

What Reinette willed to do she did at once, and in spite of the blinding pain in her head, she opened her desk and wrote as follows:

"MR BERESFORD,—I must see you. Come without delay.

"MISS HETHERTON."

This done she attempted to dress, but finding an elaborate toilet too much for her, weak and sick as she was, she contented herself with a cool, white cambric wrapper, with rows of lace and embroidery down the front, and bows of delicate pink ribbon on the pockets and sleeves. Over this she threw a dainty Parisian jacket or sacque of the same hue, letting her dark wavy hair fall loosely down her back. She always wore it so when she had this headache, and she made a pretty, beautiful and striking picture for Mrs. Jerry to contemplate when, in answer to her ring, that lady presented herself at the door to know what her mistress would have. Like most women, Mrs. Jerry had a hundred remedies for the headache, but Reinette wished for none of them. Nothing was of any avail until the pain ran its course, which it usually did in twenty-four hours, and all she asked was to be left in quiet in the library below, where she proposed going to wait for Mr. Beresford, whom Pierre found in his office, and with him Phil Rossiter, the two talking together of the young lady at Hetherton Place and comparing their impressions of her.

"Not so very pretty, but bright and quite agreeable, with a will of her own." Mr. Beresford said, guardedly, remembering what Phil had predicted with regard to the immediate surrender of his heart to the foreigner.

"Yes, and proud as Lucifer, too, or I'm mistaken," answered Phil, "Why, I really believe she means to ride over us all. Odd, though, that she'd never heard of a soul of us. That snob of a Hetherton must have been a queer chap."

At this moment Pierre appeared in the door, bowing and gesticulating, and jabbering unintelligibly as he handed the note to Mr. Beresford, who read it aloud, while Phil said laughingly, though in reality he secretly felt aggrieved:

"You see, it is you for whom she has sent She does not care for me."

Strangely enough, notwithstanding his imperfect knowledge of English, Pierre understood the last part of Philip's speech, and his gestures were more vehement than ever as he turned to Phil, for whom he had conceived a liking because he could speak a little of his own language, and assured him that he was mistaken. Miss Reinette cared for him very much indeed, very much, and had asked much about him, and noticed him much at the grave, and when he went by on horseback. It was business alone which had prompted her to send for monsieur; later she would be most happy to see young monsieur, her cousin.

Phil could not follow the old man readily, thought he made out that Reinette had sent this message to him, or something like it, and he changed his mind about starting for Martha's Vineyard that afternoon as he had resolved to do. He would see Reinette first, and hear her speak to him face to face.

"Tell her I shall be there some time today," he said to his more fortunate friend, the lawyer, who, nothing loth to meet the glance of Reinette's bright eyes once more, was soon riding rapidly toward Hetherton Place.

Reinette's head was worse than it had been earlier in the morning, but she insisted upon seeing Mr. Beresford, who was admitted at once to the room, which Mrs. Jerry made as dark as possible, but which was still light enough for him to distinguish distinctly the little figure in pink and white, reclining in the easy-chair, with masses of long dark hair rippling down its back, and a wet napkin upon the forehead, partially concealing the eyes, which, nevertheless, flashed a welcome upon him as he came in, feeling himself a little abashed in the presence of this foreign girl in her pretty dishabille, with her loose wide sleeves showing her round white arms to her elbows, and her little high-heeled pink-rosetted slippers resting on the footstool. She on the contrary was as composed and unconscious as if he had been a block of wood, instead of a man, with all a man's impulse to worship and admire.

"Oh, Mr. Beresford," she began, offering him one wet hand, while with the other she took the napkin from her head, and, dipping it in the bowl of water on the stand beside her, wrung it lightly and replaced it on her forehead, letting a bit of the fringe hang over her eyes, while drops of water ran down her face and fell from the end of her nose. Reinette was not thinking of herself, she was intent upon a more important matter, and detent upon a more important matter, and determined to have it off her mind, she plunged at once into the subject: "Oh, Mr. Beresford, it was so kind in you to come so soon I could not wait. Yes, thank you, it is an awful headache, but I'm accustomed to them, and I don't mind, if you don't. Mrs. Jerry said it was hardly the thing to receive you in this way, but I am sure it does not matter. A girl with the headache cannot be expected to dress as for a dinner, and I can't bear my hair bound up, though I might fix it a little,' and, with a dexterous, quick movement, Reinette took the whole mass of wavy hair in her hand, and giving it a twist and a sweep backward, wet the napkin again, and spatting it down on her forehead, went on:

"I must see you this morning, because father said I was to ask you everything—trust you with everything—and I want to know—I want you to tell me—those people—those ladies—my grandmother said she was coming to-day to talk over matters, and how can I talk if I don't know what to say?"

Mr. Beresford was sure he didn't know, and she continued:

"It may seem strange to you, who did not know father intimately, to know how little he talked of his affairs to any one. Even with regard to mother, he was very reticent, and never told me anything, except that she died in Rome, when I was born, and that her name was Margaret Ferguson. I always thought she was English, and built many castles about her and her relatives, and so, you see, I was a little surprised yesterday when they claimed me—such a number of them, it seemed. Were there many?"

"Only three," Mr. Beresford replied, knowing that she had no reference to Phil when she talked of "these people."

"Yes, three," she continued, "and I fear I was not as gracious as I might have been, for I was so astonished to be claimed when I did not know for sure that I had a relative in the world. Mr. Beresford, would you mind telling me all you know about my mother? Did she pick huckleberries with Mrs. Jerry, and cut up bits of calico for the sake of sewing them together again?"

The napkin went into the water with a great splash, and then back to her forehead as she said this, but her eyes were fixed on Mr. Beresford, who, not knowing what she meant by the berries and the bits of calico, said I do did not, but continued, laughingly:

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE NEWEST FASHIONS IN LONDON.

(Truth.)

It was my fortune to be present at a recent entertainment at which the apostles of the Æsthetic *culte* had mustered in great force. The affectations of this curious clique make them deliciously amusing to watch. The men are rather more ridiculous than the women and the women rather wilder in appearance than the men, owing to the greater freedom of the female in the matter of attire.

As to coloring the usual prevalence of sickly yellow-greens and unwholesome reds was observable; and the eccentricities of form were too numerous to record. One lady, however, deserves notice for the careful way in which she was upholstered in some brown moreen that had apparently done duty as window drapery for several successive seasons.

The coiffures of the women were ruffled and short, the hair of the men towzled and long, and in every case thrown back from the forehead in a manner that must have taken years of careful tending to attain. Some of the men indulged in the feeble feminity of a fringe.

The fashionable *point d'appui* of the male aesthete is the chimney-piece, which, fortunately, was not in the Queen Anne style on this occasion, or it would have been impossibly high. This is the attitude—Lean the elbow on the chimney-piece. Turn back the open hand, so that it may comfortably support the side of the jaw. The head is thus thrown back, and the nose, consequently, is well in the air. It is one of the first lessons to be learned by the novice in æstheticism to wear the nose thus. The back is slightly bent, and one leg is gracefully curled round the other. The thinner the legs the better. No æsthetic must venture to be even comfortably round and substantial. When an æsthete grows stout he immediately turns renegade, and laughs at his former companions.

The attitude of the æsthetic lady is also worth describing. She begins by getting her chair close to the wall, and then sinks into it sideways in such a way that her draperies leave the outline of her figure plainly visible. Having ascertained, without appearing to do so, that this is correctly arranged, she leans her