

ment of petulance. He resolved to follow up the clue, and see what would result.

"Forbes," he said—after he had deceived his friend into his library—"have you heard anything of Simson lately?"

"No," gruffly responded the schoolmaster.

"By-the-by, what became of the girl he jilted?" asked Mr. James.

"She's at home, still," replied Mr. Forbes.

"Not married yet?"

"No!"

"How's that? Surely she's a worthy girl? You should get her a fine young fellow to console her."

Mr. Forbes sprang to his feet.

"Young fellow!" he said, scornfully. "Has a girl no aim in life but to be won by the first young fellow that whistles at her? Do you think she has any reason for loving a young fellow?"

"Well, then," said Mr. James—hiding a smile by stroking his face—"let us say an old fellow. Will that suit you better?"

Mr. Forbes' face flushed. He looked at Mr. James earnestly, and meeting the laughing eyes of his friend, dropped his own in some confusion.

"Ho, ho!" laughed Mr. James. "I have caught you at last, have I! 'Didn't know the girl,' you told me, and here I find everything settled between you. Well, bring your wife here, and if Simson was too proud to recognize her, we will not be."

"But I haven't won her!" exclaimed Mr. Forbes. "I'm too old to *try* even."

"Look here, Forbes, when it didn't matter much, I let you rant about your patriarchal age. Now, tell me honestly, how old are you?"

"Thirty-nine."

"And the girl?"

"I don't know; I should say twenty-four."

"H'm."

Mr. James did not like the difference in the ages. But he stretched a point for his old friend.

"Well," he said, "she's old enough to be her own judge. Go and ask her, and if she refuse you why you are not the first unfortunate, nor will you be the last."

"Do you think me too old to marry?" asked Mr. Forbes, eagerly. "Would a woman be throwing herself away in taking me?"

"Not a bit," said Mr. James, heartily. "She has had her romance"—("Tut, tut," said Mr. Forbes)—"and knows what she is doing."

"I'll ask her," said Mr. Forbes, "and if she take me, I'll never forget your kindness."

Mr. Forbes went back to Frankville, and took up his residence in the old house again, with Granny Smith to play propriety. In spite of his bold declaration to Mr. James, he hesitated to declare himself. He realized that Lizzie was, to a certain extent, dependent upon him, and could not bring himself to take advantage of her dependency, and, as he thought, buy her.

He went away again, and again returned, when he was met by Granny Smith with no very good show of kindness.

A day or two after his second arrival, the old lady came curtseying into his study.

"Well, Granny," he said, "what can I do for you?"

"I'm thinkin' of leavin' Mr. Forbes," she said.

"But you can't do that!" he exclaimed, aghast. "Lizzie wants you here. You cannot leave her alone."

"Why can't I?" she said.

Mr. Forbes was silent. He did not feel equal to explaining.

"Why can't I?" she repeated. "Isn't there one here who can take better care of her than an old woman like me?"

"What do you mean, woman?"

"What do I mean? I mean that you're treating the poor girl like a brute, and I won't stay to see it. She's dying for a smile from your lips, and you steal away from her as if she was the plague."

Mr. Forbes rose; he always did when excited.

"Hush! hush!" he said.

"I'll not hush," said Granny. "When you went away first she was like a moulting bird, and never sung a note. Then you came back, and the house was full of her songs. You went away again, and the same thing happened. She drooped like a parched flower. And now you are back—hark! there she is singing again. But there's sorrow in that song, too, and it breaks my old heart to hear it; for I love the girl."

Mr. Forbes stepped forward, and took the old dame's hands in his.

"You are sure of this?" he asked, tremblingly.

"Ay," she said, "I am."

He parted the white hair and kissed the withered brow.

"Then, Granny," he said, "there will be no more sorrow in her song through me, for I have loved the lass for years."

His courting was simple. It always is simple when the lover knows the prize is already his. He feared a little, and took occasion to tell her of his love in song. It was a bright autumn day, and the three were sitting on the broad verandah. Mr. Forbes had his violin with him, and turning to Lizzie, he said—

"Would you like me to sing you a song, Lizzie?"

"One of your own?" she enquired.

"Yes."

"Please."

It was a simple song—not a poem by a great master—yet, with the music wedded to it, sweet and touching.

"I have given it no name," he said, as he prepared to sing. "You may do that for me afterwards."

Granny settled herself well back in the shadow—old women smell a love-scene very far off—and he began to sing:—

"She's a young thing and a sweet thing,
Like a spray of Christmas holly;
She's a dear thing and a nest thing,
And I love her—is it folly?
Yet she fears me, and I tremble,
Like a leaf, when she is nigh.
Tell me, why does love dissemble?—
Tell me, dearest, why?"