

"My own disappointments have not been very serious matters so far. I was thinking of others," she added, half sadly. "But you know we are always looking forward to something brighter and better in the future than we possess in the present. And so the days pass on while we are hoping and reaching after that bright, intangible something, which lures us on, eluding our grasp like a will-o'-the-wisp, till our years are all spent and our lives ended like a tale that is told!"

There was a passionate ring of pain in her voice, as though her own words had aroused some bitter memory. She was thinking of her father, that brave, patient man who had fought such a good fight against misfortune, always hoping for success, always meeting with disappointment, till, wearied out, he fell.

But Jack, not knowing this, wondered at her passionate words. "Surely," he said, "it is foolish as well as wrong, to allow anticipation of future evil to mar our enjoyment of present good; 'sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,' but on the other hand, anticipation of future joy, though good in moderation, becomes dangerous if encouraged to dominate the mind to the exclusion of all power of appreciating present benefits. To my mind, true wisdom consists in accepting in simple faith, and enjoying to the utmost the good things which the Almighty allows us day by day. We who are young, who have no bitter past to look back upon, can surely be happy without worrying about the future. Youth is a glorious possession, Miss Brown, is it not?"

"Yes," answered the girl, softly. She remembered that once Standfield had said the same thing to her in the very same words.

"But it is brief," she added, sadly.

"All life is brief; therefore we should make the most of it while it lasts," said Jack, with a curious blending of seriousness and light-heartedness. Judith, looking down at the young Englishman, thought that he had more in him than she had at first given him credit for. She was conscious of feeling a sincere liking and respect for him at this moment; a feeling which grew and ripened as day by day she gained a clearer insight into his frank, genial nature.

"Well, Jack, what do you think of Littleworth?" Reggie asked her, two or three days later, as the brother and sister sauntered toward the orchard, where the rest of the party were apparently holding a strawberry festival. The strawberry beds of Bonny Dale were famous for their fine and abundant fruit.

"I like him very much, and consider you fortunate in possessing such a friend," answered his sister, frankly.

Yes, he is a thorough good fellow; but there's not much comfort to be got out of a friend when the ocean rolls between oneself and him."

"Does he intend soon to return to England, then?" asked Judith, with a shade of regret in her tone.

"He says his father wants him home before winter sets in."

"Ah, you two truants! where have you concealed yourselves all this afternoon?" cried Jack, springing to his feet and motioning Judith to the low wicker chair which he had just occupied; at the same instant Standfield also arose and brought forward his chair for her. Clarence Thorpe was sprawling on the grass.

She hesitated a moment and then took the chair Jack offered. "Thank you, Mr. Standfield," she said, smiling sweetly upon him, "I will take the low chair; I have a weakness for low seats."

Standfield did not know whether to be pleased or annoyed at this little incident. Judith had grown coy of late, consequently he experienced more difficulty in his wooing than at first. Sometimes he assured himself that this new-born reserve of hers was a good omen; if she were quite indifferent to him she would be friendly and open with him. But there were seasons when this form of reasoning failed to satisfy him, and he was tortured by fear and jealousy; for by this time he was very hopelessly in love, as the reader will perceive. Altogether, Mr. Standfield, at this interesting period in his life, was not a happy man. What man or woman can truthfully say that he or she was really happy while passing through the early stages of the fevered dream called love? The unfortunate victim is torn by every imaginable form of fear, doubt and jealousy; even the purely blissful intervals are agonizing by reason of their intensity. Taken all in all it is an anxious time for all parties concerned, until the stupendous question has been asked and answered, the engagement ring given and accepted. And even then—but we will say no more or we might go on speculating on the subject to the end of the chapter.

"Thank you, Mr. Thorpe," said Judith, as that young man brought her a heaped-up saucer of strawberries and cream.

"What magnificent berries!" cried Reggie, "I hope you have plenty more of them, Augusta—enough to last out my visit."

"More than enough, I assure you."

"I am rejoiced to hear it; I shall make it my duty to visit the strawberry beds every day, to see how they are getting on."

"What a gourmand you are," drawled Jack, lazily. Meanwhile Standfield had taken his chair over near Judith's, and was watching with admiring eyes the girl's cool, fair face, and the graceful, languid way in which she disposed of the ripe red berries, which were no redder than the beautiful lips.

"We have been discussing the arrangements for a picnic to Bonny Woods to-morrow; what do you think of it?"

"That it will be charming," she answered, raising her eyes for a moment to his face. There was no coquetry in that fleeting glance, only a shy reserve, which, somehow, pleased Standfield wonderfully at this moment; while Miss Laurie, who had also observed that brief uplifting of Judy's blue eyes, was fuming inwardly at what she termed the girl's artfulness. So the summer days went by, and the two weeks of Jack's and Reggie's visit, lengthened into three by special request, passed swiftly and pleasantly in a round of simple country enjoyments. Drives and walks by moonlight in the cool, sweet air; picnic and fishing expeditions, in the latter of which Judith frequently, and Augusta sometimes, joined. Then, boating in the cool of the evening, when the whole party rowed up stream, singing in chorus, or laughing and jesting light-heartedly as young people will do when they get together; after which there was the walk home by moonlight, from the river side, when sometimes it fell out that Standfield and Judith got separated from the others and were the last to arrive at Bonny Dale gates.

"Very reprehensible," Jack said, disapprovingly, but he evidently saw nothing reprehensible in it, when it happened to be Jack and Judy, instead of Standfield and Judy, who were the dawdlers.

Circumstances alter cases, wonderfully.

(To be Continued.)