

"And what was her verdict?" asked Geoffrey, with a slight smile.

"Unfavourable. I hope, Geoffrey, that it will not be a great pain to Miss Abbot if my wife does not appear so cordial as one might wish. It is to be left to Lady Portmayne's decision, so you can anticipate how it will end."

"I am not surprised. If I were going to live in the neighbourhood it might be a serious matter," said Geoffrey lightly, for his sister-in-law's disapproval did not then seem of much importance. "We must just endeavour to survive the withdrawal of the Portmayne effulgency from our simple nuptials," he added, with mild scorn. "Perhaps some day lady Emily will be proud to acknowledge my wife."

"I am glad you feel no bitterness over it, Geoff."

"I? Oh, no; and Emily is not to be blamed. I am going in direct opposition to every tenet of her creed. I am committing social suicide," said Geoffrey, lightly. "Oh, is there anything for me to-night?"

"Yes, your promotion," said the Squire, heartily. "So you have to be doubly congratulated, Captain Ayre."

"I hope it will be General Ayre some day, old boy. I shouldn't mind a bit of active service in India. It gives a fellow a chance."

The Squire shook his head.

"I thought you had enough glory for a while," he said, with a slight laugh. "No man can say you are not devoted to your profession. For your wife's sake, I hope there will be nothing to disturb the peace of the lieges while you are in Delhi. Well, I must go upstairs. Do you see what o'clock it is?"

"Yes, but this is a special night in a fellow's life, Will. I am not inclined for sleep, so I will sit here for a bit, if you don't mind. Tell Emily it is all right. I hope she won't tackle me, Will, for I couldn't stand it. The Portmayne theories are too many for me," said Geoffrey, half apologetically. "Good-night."

"Good-night, and God bless you and yours for ever, Geoff," said the Squire, with unwonted solemnity, and with a warm hand-clasp he left the room. As he passed by the door of his wife's boudoir, she called to him to come in.

"Has Geoffrey come in?" she asked, when he entered. "I thought I heard your voices. Is it all settled?"

"Yes; they are to be married on the 24th."

"I guessed that there would not be much uncertainty," she said with a smile. "Well, I have written to mamma; you can read the letter if you like, William, then I can add the post-script that the date is fixed."

"Thank you, but I don't care to read it," he answered, and, leaning up against the cabinet, he looked for a moment at the graceful figure in the rich dressing gown, at the fair, calm face bent over the escritoire. How lovely she was, and yet how hard at heart! "I am going to Pine Edge in the morning, Emily. I suppose you will not go."

"I; oh, no. There will be time enough after mamma writes. I have asked her to reply by return of post," she answered, placidly, as her pen busily traced the postscript to the closely-written sheet.

"Lady Portmayne's reply may be anticipated, Emily," he said, quietly. "I think that in this matter you might have decided for yourself, and shown a little consideration for me. I have no kindred in the world but my brother Geoffrey, and it is not fair that you should treat him so ungenerously at such a time as this."

Lady Emily's face flushed, and she bit her lip. She was not often rebuked, and she was quick to resent it.

"We cannot quarrel over it, William—it is not worth it," she said, without looking round. "I regret that you should feel obliged to use such a word as 'ungenerous' to me. I am not conscious of having failed in courtesy to your brother, who has so often been an inmate of our house."

She intended the last sentence to indicate that she had felt the soldier's frequent presence at Studleigh something of a burden. William Ayre

flushed high to the brow, and, turning on his heel, left the room. His wife had sent a shaft to his heart which would long rankle. She knew she had hurt him; but convinced that he deserved it, it did not cause her any remorse or concern. She elaborated her postscript a little, and gave to her mother the subject of the conversation they just had, and folding her letter she sealed it and went calmly to bed.

There was a slight constraint in the atmosphere of the breakfast-room at Studleigh next morning. The Squire, usually so cordial and so courteous, was curiously silent; but Lady Emily evinced no sign of any unusual agitation, and talked freely to Geoffrey on commonplace things, never, of course, alluding in the remotest degree to the matter which was uppermost in their minds. Immediately after breakfast the brothers set out for Pine Edge. It was a lovely morning, the dawn had been dull and misty, but a glorious burst of sunshine had dispelled the gloom, and restored the warmth and brilliance of a beneficent spring to the earth. The dew lay heavy on the grass, and hung in filmy mists about the trees, dissolving into glittering diamonds under the sun gleams. They walked to the avenue gates and turned up the high road towards the farm, the short path through the fields being soaked with the heavy dew.

"There's Abbot, Will," said Geoffrey, pointing to the paddock adjoining the house. "I'll go and speak to him, while you go to the house. I would rather you saw Rachel alone."

"So would I," the Squire answered; and with a wave of his hand to the farmer he entered the little avenue and strode on to the house. Rachel saw him come, and herself opened the door to him. As he crossed the little lawn and saw her standing in the green shadow of the porch, he thought her one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen. There was a strange hesitation in her manner, her cheeks were flushed and her eyes moist as she waited for him. He lifted his hat with his kind, grave smile, and when he stepped up to her put his arm about her shoulders and kissed her.

"I have never had a sister, Rachel," he said, with a sunny smile. "Who would have dreamed in the old days when we hunted for blackberries in the coppice woods that it would have come to this?"

Rachel could not speak. She led the way silently into the cool, shady dining-room, and when she had closed the door she turned to him with a swift gesture, and a look he never forgot.

"Oh, sir, do you think I am worthy? He would not listen to me, and perhaps I did not try very hard to make him listen," she said, with a swift flush. "But I have been thinking all night long, and will speak plainly. Do you think, Mr. Ayre, that I shall be any weight upon him to drag him down? His life is before him, and if you, who are always so wise and good, think so, I—I can give him up. It would be easier now than to feel when it was too late that we had made a mistake."

Her words touched William Ayre inexpressibly. He saw that it was an effort for her to utter them, but that the very highest motive prompted them. Rachel Abbot was a woman to whom self-sacrifice was a sacred duty, from which, when it was made plain to her, she would never flinch. It was no small pain at that moment to the master of Studleigh to recognise in her a fairer and more noble womanhood than was dreamed of in his wife's philosophy.

"I think, Rachel, that, instead of dragging him down, you will urge him on towards what is highest and best. There is nothing I will not hope and expect from my brother now," he said with most generous sincerity.

"My father spoke last night to me about the difference in our stations. I confess I did not think of that at all," she said, frankly, and the Squire could not but smile at the very unconsciousness which in Lady Emily's eyes was so heinous an offence. "Father said, too, that it was your great goodness and kindness which had made the difference so little felt. Of course, when he spoke I saw it at once, and I have to speak of that, too. Would it make any difference to him? Would it

keep him back in his profession or make him suffer in any way? I ask you these things, Mr. Ayre, because I am so ignorant of the world, and because I know it's no use asking Geoffrey. You will be true with me, I know."

(To be Continued.)



THE CENTURY.

The gem of the April number of this magazine is a story by Richard Harding Davis, entitled "There were Ninety and Nine." It bears a simplicity and quiet pathos rarely seen, and altogether is one of the most charming sketches of the day. Other articles of special interest are "The Wordsworths and De Quincy," by H. A. Page; "Two Expeditions to Mount St. Elias" (Alaska), by Frederick Schwatka and Israel C. Russel; and "Cold Cheer at Camp Morton," by John A. Wyeth. This last shows vividly the sufferings undergone by Confederate prisoners in northern prison-camps. Three more articles on the California series are given, and will be interesting to many. There are also some beautiful poems by the late Charles Henry Lüders; of these, "The Four Winds" is especially charming. Altogether the number is a very attractive one.

THE YOUNG CANADIAN.

This illustrated weekly, so creditable to Canadian enterprise, keeps well up to the high standard with which it set out. Recent numbers contain an interesting serial by Mr. S. M. Baylis, so well known to our readers; bright stories by popular writers, short poems, and many articles which must prove of great interest to young people, and to not a few old ones. A strong patriotic vein runs through the journal.

THE METHODIST MAGAZINE.

Canada has but few monthly periodicals; and of them all, the *Methodist Magazine* leads in age and size. Though largely denominational, many articles of general interest are given. The April number before us contains a poem by "Pastor Felix,"—Rev. Arthur John Lockhart—some pretty little pieces on travel in England and the continent, an interesting summary of the late Prof. Winchell's article on "The Reign of Ice," besides much relating purely to Methodist subjects. One of these should be read by all students of Canadian history, "The Loyal Origin of Canadian Methodism," by the late Dr. Ryerson. Although published many years ago, it will be new to most people. The magazine is edited by Dr. Withrow, and published by William Briggs, Toronto.

THE WEEK.

The last issue of this high-class paper is one of great interest. A leading article is that sketching the life of our well known and loved poet, Archibald Lampman. Montreal readers will be attracted by the recital of the Indian legend on "The Volcano of Mount Royal"—we are selfish enough to hope that the fulfilment of the prophecy may be deferred until after the Millennium. Mr. Hopkins' letter on "Our Commercial Relations with the Empire," is an able argument for a policy which is rapidly gaining adherents both in Britain and Canada.

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY.

All lovers of Parkman—and there are many—should read his article on the "Capture of Louisburg," continued in the April *Atlantic*. It is full of the vivid interest which characterizes everything from that pen. The description of the careless, hap-hazard way in which the siege was conducted by the raw New England militia is especially taking. George Frederick Wright gives a valuable paper on "Pre-historic Man on the Pacific Coast," while all lovers of birds and bird-life will find much to interest them in Olive Thorne Miller's article entitled "From my Window." Other attractive features in the number are "Goethe's Key to Faust," by William P. Andrews; "An Unexplored Corner of Japan," by Percival Lowell, while fiction and poetry are well represented. "The Contributors' Club" is, as usual, a delightful half-dozen of pages of book-gossip.