

Clarice thought she would be perfectly happy, for like a sensible girl she speedily conquered her passing annoyance, and was on the best of terms with her hostess.

Then followed lunch in the big dining-room, which to Clarice would have been oppressive had not Miss Artleton chatted and joked in a manner that astonished her silent servitors, but which set Clarice at her ease.

The misleading dust-cloak and the girlish sailor-hat had vanished, and, attired in a soft grey cashmere and a cap of lace, Miss Artleton looked what she was—a dainty old lady.

As they left the table and went into a conservatory, Clarice looked at her earnestly. "A penny for your thoughts, my dear. No, I won't be put off."

"I was thinking how pretty you must have been when you were a young girl, indeed you are pretty still!" said Clarice shyly.

"You wicked little flatterer!" frowned Miss Artleton, but there was a gleam of gratified vanity in her eyes. "There is my photo," and opening a locket that was suspended from a chain she revealed two portraits, one of a girl with sunny eyes and golden curls, and the other of a dark, handsome man.

For an instant Clarice looked at the two faces, then she raised her eyes questioningly—"Yes, my dear, I too have had my little romance—a love-story of one chapter with an abrupt conclusion. It will have its sequel in another world. My lover was drowned on his way to India where he hoped to win fame and fortune. My father was a proud man and so was my Dennis, and thus I am left alone. Now we have talked enough sentiment, you have captured my heart, little girl, or I should not unlock its secrets. This is my favourite rose-tree. Would you like a bunch of roses to carry home for your good kind mother?"

"How do you know that my mother is good and kind?"

"I have judged the mother by the daughter, little greenhorn."

"I am afraid you are the flatterer now," laughed Clarice. "By-the-way, Miss Artleton, next half-holiday Miss Martin and Miss Pringle are coming to Artleton with the Darcy Street Sunday School scholars."

"Yes, they are to have tea under the trees in the park," answered Miss Artleton with a comical smile.

"Ellen and Dolly are merely thoughtless, not really unkind, Miss Artleton. You know you do look different in the sailor hat and dust-cloak."

Miss Artleton laughed. "Yes, I believe I do. I think I shall discard them. I am sure my maid will rejoice. If she dared I believe she would sell them to the rag-man. But though she has been with me twenty-seven

years she never takes liberties with my property. By-the-way, how old are you?"

"Twenty-one."

"And when did you say you were to be married?"

"I didn't mention any time," answered Clarice blushing.

"You said your Charlie—wasn't that the name?—was clerk in Griffith and Gaunt's office."

"Yes, but he is a very intelligent fellow—not at all like the ordinary run of clerks. I am sure he will rise if he has the chance."

"Doubtless, my dear!" said Miss Artleton with emphasis. "He is a perfect young man, I feel sure."

"Now you are laughing at me. I am sure you thought Mr. Dennis was perfect."

"I was just as enthusiastic as you, my dear. Now you shall sing for me."

"Oh, I cannot!"

"But you brought your songs for that purpose."

"I thought—I thought," faltered Clarice.

"You thought I was a friendless old woman, and so I am. Come and try my favourite piano." And drawing aside a curtain Miss Artleton led the way into a spacious drawing-room.

"Please don't be critical!" implored Clarice.

"I shall see!" answered Miss Artleton grimly. "Do you play 'The Bird Waltz,' and 'The Last Rose of Summer,' with variations?"

"No I don't!" cried Clarice indignantly. "Never despise the old airs, my dear. Now sing something soft and sweet."

"This is mother's favourite," and striking a few chords Clarice cried, "Oh what a lovely piano!"

"Is that your mother's favourite, my dear?"

And without further hesitation Clarice sang "Darby and Joan."

Though her voice was not highly cultured it was very fresh and sweet, and when she had finished Miss Artleton looked at her with eyes that were suspiciously moist.

"Thank you, my dear, your voice is very soothing."

"Mother always says so," answered Clarice simply.

"But it has defects which I will point out to you some day. Have you guessed my Christian name, Clarice?"

"No, Miss Artleton."

"My name is Joan, and if you wish to please me you will call me Miss Joan. It is a whim, my dear, merely a whim. Now I think I should like to rest. You won't mind my absence?"

"I hope I have not tired you. Charlie will

be waiting in the village. I must go. I have enjoyed myself so much."

"In spite of the disappointment that I was not a pauper?"

Clarice laughed.

"You are so different from what I imagined the real Miss Artleton would be; but you are so much nicer!" cried Clarice enthusiastically.

"Thank you, my dear. Be sure you come next half-holiday, and bring your mother and Charlie. And don't betray me to your two companions at the ribbon counter. Good-bye, dear!" And, leaning forward, the lady of the manor kissed the shop-girl.

As she walked along the avenue, Clarice felt as if she were in a dream, from which she would suddenly awake and find herself in Hamer Street. Those stately British oaks were real and substantial. There was nothing airy or visionary in their construction. And, marvelling at the events of the afternoon, Clarice walked through the lodge gates along the dusty road to the village.

Artleton nestled in a hollow, and as she walked towards it she began to look for her lover.

All down the village street were ivy-covered cottages and trim little gardens, each one of them looking as though its owner took a pride in home and a pleasure in life.

Presently she saw the back of a tweed-clad figure of a man standing near to a garden gate, and a rosy-faced woman, with whom the man appeared to be conversing. She drew near noiselessly.

"No, sir, I don't know any poor person in t' village like what you describe. There's Martha Grime an' 'Melia Huggins, but it won't be either o' them. One on 'em suffers from t' rheumatics an' t' other from brownchitis, an' I can't think o' nobody else. Mistress Taylor's been to Sandrington this mornin'; but shoo's a terrible big woman, an' shoo comed by 'ersel'. I know, for I were mendin' our David's stockin's when shoo passed t' garden gate. The carriage from the Manor druv past about two o'clock, an' there were a young lady in it, an' our Polly says to me, 'Do you think Miss Artleton's gotten company, mother?' But of course that couldn't be them as you're lookin' for."

"Oh, no, the old person I mean would not drive in the Manor carriage!"

"Then I can't give you no more infymation, sir. You might ax Miss Megson at the shop. Shoo's as likely to know as anybody. You'll see t' shop when you get up t' hill. There's a post office wi' it." And with a nod the old woman went into her cottage.

"I think I can give you a little 'infymation'!" laughed a girlish voice. And, turning, Charlie beheld Clarice.

(To be continued.)

## HOUSEHOLD HINTS.

DISCARDED tea cosies of a large size can be usefully employed to cover over hot water cans in bedrooms. The water can be kept hot for a long time if thus covered over.

CELLULOID balls and other toys, though very pretty to look at, should never be given to children, as they are highly inflammable and very dangerous.

NEVER slam an oven door if pastry or cakes are cooking in the oven—it will make them heavy.

DO not ever burn or throw away corks—they are valuable in many ways.

THE nicest way to eat an orange is to cut a slice off the top and scoop out all the juice with a tea-spoon; a spoonful of sugar can be put in the middle if the fruit is sour.

PINEAPPLE juice is said to be valuable in cases of diphtheria.

BOOTS and shoes should never be kept in a cupboard or box; they should be left where air can get freely to them, and whenever it is possible the insides should be aired.

SILK handkerchiefs are extremely nice to use, and a present of a few to an invalid would be very acceptable.

COCOA is always best made with milk, not water, and should be boiled, not merely made with boiling water.

NUTS and almonds are very nourishing food.

BEDROOM fires should be lit oftener than they are; it would save much illness and many colds, for it is when one goes to bed tired and weary after sitting in hot rooms that one is most apt to catch cold.

TOOTHBRUSHES should be occasionally placed in cold water with a little borax, sanitas or other disinfectant, and left to stand in it for a while.