

cousin in England. "The dear old Admiral!" Mrs. Merton called him, and as such only I knew of him.

Mrs. Merton seemed never to hesitate in accepting her cousin's offer, and at once began preparations for her long journey, apparently without thought of her daughters, who had not even been mentioned by "the dear old Admiral." The only time the mother ever spoke of those she was going to leave behind was one day at dinner, when, finding on her plate some delicacy Mabel's thoughtfulness had provided, she said, "I am glad for your sakes I am going to England; I know I have been nothing but a burden to you."

Kate cried, "Oh, mamma, don't say so;" but Mabel sat quietly, with her eyes looking out of the window, as she so often did, and did not say a word.

It was but a few days after Mrs. Merton had announced her sudden intentions, that Kate told Mabel she and Charlie Seaforth were to be married before Mrs. Merton left. Mabel was surprised, and for one moment I could see the color leave her face and her lips tremble; but it was soon over, and she kissed her sister, and told her she was very, very glad to hear it; she knew Charlie was so good.

Whether the young gentleman owed the fulfilment of his long-cherished hopes to Mrs. Merton's strange move, I could never ascertain. I had my doubts on the subject.

And so Kate was married, and she and Charlie saw Mrs. Merton off on her Atlantic voyage, and Mabel sold the scanty remains of furniture, and rented the little house, and then she packed what few possessions she had, and we moved into a quiet little town street, and had two cosy little rooms, much better than Reginald Leigh's were.

To do Mrs. Merton justice, I believe she fully expected Mabel would go with Kate to her new home, and it was Kate's wish she should do so; but if Charlie's persuasions, which indeed rose to entreaties, failed, little wonder that Kate could not succeed. Mabel was firm; she said it was better not, that she would be quite happy by herself, and could, with ease, earn her own living, and I agreed with her, and felt no doubt about her getting on. Then,

too, there was a great attraction to Mabel in these town lodgings, for they were close to Annie Miller's home, and the two friends helped each other a great deal.

So we were very happy in our little room, though my mistress had shed a good many tears when she had dismantled the old home, and bid it a last farewell.

Charlie and Kate often came to see us, and they seemed very happy, as I suppose all newly-married people are, or ought to be; but I did not trouble myself much about them—my own dear mistress took up all my thoughts and attention.

CHAPTER X.

Though Mabel was seldom depressed, never really melancholy, the winter in the little room in Maple street, was a long one; indeed, I doubted not, winters and summers passed slowly enough to my patient, waiting mistress. She had not, it is true, to work so hard as in the old home, but she had more time to think; and though neither Kate nor her mother had ever been true companions, I am sure Mabel often felt lonely in the long winter evenings.

But they passed at last, and spring came again, making the heart involuntarily light and gay, whatever cause it might have for sadness, and Mabel caught the infection and sang like the birds, and smiled like the flowers, and one day she came home with something brighter than sunshine in her eyes, and something sweeter than were the songs of birds on her lips. I looked at her one moment almost wonderingly; but then I wondered no longer, I knew that the long looked for, earnestly prayed for letter had come at last!

Winter was indeed over for Mabel Merton, and the joyous springtime had come. All that letter contained I do not know, nor would I tell even you my kind reader if I did. Such confessions as Reginald Leigh must have made, such thoughts as he penned, were but for one eye to scan—one heart to rejoice over, and that one alone could fully comprehend all.

All the evening Mabel moved gently about, collecting her few valuables, and packing them in the old black trunk that