

order of all vain and foolish ones to depart from her mind.

One evening, as they sat together at tea, Mr. Elton said to his wife, "My dear, do you remember your old friend, Lucy Lawrence?"

"Oh, Yes! but it is many years since I have seen her. She married—who was it?—odd that I can't remember!"

"There is a son of her's in town, and as I knew you would like to see him, I invited him to spend an evening with us. His name is Lawrence Norton—the name of whom I spoke to you, Grace."

"Well!" said Mrs. Elton; but her countenance expressed anything but pleasure. She seemed absorbed in thought several minutes; at last, suddenly starting, she addressed Grace—"My dear, I quite forgot to tell you that your friend Mary is not well; and I think you had better go this evening and see her."

"What if she should come while I am gone?" thought Grace; and she thought it expedient to drink half a cup of scalding tea.

"Why, what's the matter with the child?" cried Mrs. E., seeing her eyes full of tears.

"The tea is so hot, mamma."

"Hardly, worth crying about, however."

Grace set off on her visit to Mary. On her return home she danced into the parlour singing—what do you think she was singing? One of Lawrence Norton's songs! And who should be there but the poet himself, and probably he knew that these words were his own. How should Grace recover from the confusion into which she had thus danced! It was rather late, and she knew that he must only stay a few minutes longer. The few minutes, however, were well improved by the young man; for he lost no time in getting acquainted with the beautiful one who had sung his song. It was natural enough that Grace should be pleased when she heard him favoured by papa to come again—it was right for the young poet to be glad to come again.

Grace could think of nothing else for a whole week. She read his poems. She could not help hoping she should meet him, if she walked out. She ran to the window many times a day when some tall personage was passing. "How delightful it will be," thought she, "to hear him talk a whole evening! I hope he will not send mamma word when he is coming again. If he does, we be unto him!—I shall be sent away."

Strange to tell, the poet did take pains to let Mrs. Elton know that he was about to honour her with his company again. Grace was delighted to spend the evening with her friend Mary.

"How provoking!" she thought. "Why am I sent out of the house in this style every time any one comes into it?" Grace was not in a very good humour. She walked slowly along the street, with her eyes cast to the ground, vexed with herself, because she couldn't help thinking of Mr. Norton, and vexed with her mamma, for denying her his delightful society.

"However," thought she, "I have always admired him ever since I have seen his poems; and there's no harm in thinking of a poet." At this moment her foot caught itself in a string which lay tangled in her path. To save herself from falling, she caught at the nearest post, which post proved to be no other than Lawrence Norton! In her haste to release the astonished poet from her embraces, she fell, and the young gentleman, imagining that she had fainted, took her unceremoniously in his arms, and carried her into the house that seemed nearest. Great was his mortification when he found that the lady had not fainted; and, if he might judge from the colour of her face at the moment, had no thought of doing so. It was, happily, the home of kind Mary, Harleley, and she had a faculty of making everybody at ease in her presence.

It was soon ascertained that Miss Grace had sprained her ankle, and that her walking home was out of the question. Mary was very sorry; but neither papa nor brother was at home, so Lawrence Norton went off very cheerfully for a

carriage. Grace was assisted to creep into it by the poet; he could not do less than accompany her; and in a few minutes the gentle, uncomplaining girl was lying comfortably upon the sofa at home, with papa, mamma, and Lawrence Norton around her. What could mamma do? Could she send the young man out of the house? Could she forbid his looking extremely handsome? Could she order him to become tedious, commonplace, "prosy-doesy" in his conversation?

The next day, however, Mrs. Elton took good care to confine Grace to her own room. "It will never do," said she, "for you to stay down stairs, where we are constantly in danger of having visitors." Moreover, the dear mamma, anxious to ascertain, if possible, the state of her daughter's heart, began to talk of Lawrence Norton. But how should she discover that which Grace knew not herself? A serious address on the evils of falling in love followed this examination; and so deep was the interest of the subject, that Mrs. Elton did not perceive the approach of the dinner-hour, nor the well-known ring of her husband. At last a forcible entrance was made into the room by the dear little man himself.

"Why, what's the matter?" cried he. "Here I've been waiting for dinner this half-hour—dinner growing colder and colder, and I hotter and hotter. Then I come and knock at your door till my knuckles are black and blue—no answer—call till my lungs are sore—no answer—and now I should like to know the meaning of all this." By this time Mr. Elton's wrath had evaporated, and he threw himself into a chair, and burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter when the astonished mamma made known to him the subject of her morning's lecture. "And all because you fancy that poor Grace may be smitten with the perfections of Lawrence Norton, or the poet with hers. Did not I tell you, my dear, that the man has a wife?" And Mr. Elton ran down to the parlour.

Mrs. Elton followed her husband, and Grace with the blood rushing away from cheek and life threw herself back upon her pillow in an agony of contending emotions. She had learned that of her heart which is not often easily taught. Why should she not with wonder and with shame own to herself that she loved? Poor Grace! How her mamma wondered at the feverish flush of her cheek, as she hurried to her side! How she instantly sent for Dr. Morton, and how anxiously she watched his face as he sat by the pillow of his patient!

The doctor was a wise as well as a good man. He did not attempt to administer a dose to the sick heart; but simply recommending quiet in a significant tone, he withdrew. Alas! to what quiet was Grace now condemned! The servants went about with laced slippers; papa was obliged to part with his boots the moment he entered the house; and the really kind mamma flitted noiselessly about like a spirit. At last Grace contrived to convince her papa that she should die, if imprisoned in this room in profound stillness, so, while Mrs. E. had gone down to scold a servant for slamming a door, Mr. Elton took Grace in his arms, and safely bore her to the sofa in the parlour.

When Mrs. E. entered the room there lay the poor invalid, with a brighter colour in her cheek than had been seen for a week. She was decidedly better. What had papa whispered in her ear when her head lay on his shoulder in the way down stairs? Oh, he only told her that Mr. Lawrence Norton had been there every day to ask respecting her—that he thought him a fine fellow—that he wished he had a son exactly like him. That evening he came again. Why should not Mrs. Elton receive him graciously? Was he not a married man? Why should not Grace frankly acknowledge that she was very glad to see him again? Why should he not stay as late as he chose, and be urged to come as often as he liked? Delightful married man! Grace had never liked any body half so well; and she could not help thinking that nobody had ever thought so well of her. As he was taking leave,

Mrs. Elton smilingly asked if his wife were in town.

"My wife, madam!" cried the poet, looking as much surprised as if he had never heard of such a thing before. "Oh, ah!—I understand—she is in town." And Lawrence Norton looked at Mr. Elton half laughingly, and added, "I did not know that I had told you about my wife; or, at least, I had forgotten her, for the moment."

"Well!" cried Mrs. Elton, the moment he had taken leave. "A fine husband, truly! Really, he looked as much astonished as if I had asked the most ridiculous question in the world! But all men are alike, I believe. So you see, Grace, what you may expect, if you are ever married."

"I don't want to be married," said Grace. "That's a good girl; and now we'll have you up stairs, and to bed. Poor child! you must be sadly tired. That man has asked you so many questions, and made you talk so much! I could see that you wished him out of the house all the time."

What could Grace say? She satisfied her conscience with a faint "Oh, no, indeed!" which her mamma did not hear.

The poet came so often, that Mrs. Elton began to get out of patience. "He comes at all sorts of odd hours," said she. "And what vexes me is, that he never mentions his wife—never asks us to go to see her—never brings her to see us. Poor thing! how much she is left alone!"

"My dear," answered Mr. Elton seriously, "I could give you a hint of something;" and he glanced significantly at Grace.

"Oh, I see now," said Mrs. Elton to herself. "Why didn't I think of it sooner? Of course it's not odd that she is not to be seen."

It became quite evident that the young gentleman "had something upon his mind," as the phrase is. Once or twice, when Grace had been alone with him for a minute, he had begun to say something which had never been finished. Grace wondered what it could be. One morning papa insisted upon taking her out for a ride. It was a fine day, and there was nothing to prevent; yet Grace seemed somewhat reluctant. She was thinking how the poet might come during her absence. Papa, however, would not allow her to decide for herself, and they set off. Presently they saw Lawrence Norton coming down the street. "He's going to our house I dare say," thought Grace. Papa must needs go out of the chaise to speak to the young man. In a few minutes he returned—declared that he had business that required attention—that Norton had nothing to do, and would like to take his place if Grace were willing. Why should she not be willing? The poet, in a happy mood, exerted himself to entertain his companion, and the ride proved a delightful one.

At last there came a pause in the conversation. All pauses are awkward, and rather than say nothing Grace said something about Mrs. Norton.

"You refer to my mother, I presume," said he.

"Oh, no—to you mentioned your wife some weeks ago, I think."

"My wife! oh—I remember. Is it possible that you thought me serious, that you believed that?"

"Indeed," said Grace, very much alarmed, "my father assured me that you were married."

"That is very odd. Some time ago—before I had seen you, or rather before our acquaintance had commenced, your father said to me one day, 'When are you to be married?' and I answered, 'Oh, for the present, poetry is my little wife.' The young gentleman improved the opportunity of making known to Grace that he had never been in love until now, &c., &c."

And Grace had owned that she was willing to have him ask mamma a little question. Certainly when the chaise stopped at Mr. Elton's door, there were two very bright faces revealed: "The poet took papa away, and Grace was glad to dance up to her own room."