

think nobly, but so hard to act so. But one day Nyle did do something in the matter though at first the very beginning looked like failure. She had first to go through an experience she had thought was never going to come to her. The experience of courtship and marriage, the story of which will be continued in our next, by your leave.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Cobweb parties and Anti-Poverty theories.

"I do declare upon an affidavit  
Romances I ne'er read like what I've seen.  
Nor, if unto the world I ever gave it,  
Would some believe that such a tale had been!"—BYRON.

"It is the unexpected that happens in this world," some one says, and surely Nyle would have endorsed this saying, had she been asked what she thought when Audrey De Vere was thrown in her way again. And it seemed so little use now, too, that it was a pity perhaps to have the meeting occur, for Nyle's heart *had* been given to him from the first. It was at a cobweb party that they met, on a landing of the stairs among the feathery palm trees set there while both were assiduously following up their "muchly-mixed-with-minor-matters" strings.

You have heard of these parties, have you not? where a number of hidden prizes are attached to strings which wind in and out around the room and out into halls and other rooms, through chairs and over pictures till the ends are fastened up in a May-pole-like canopy to some central point. When the guests have arrived each one is given an end and they must follow up their line to the end to secure the prize. The young man who was nearest Nyle, to her great regret, seemed to be obliged to work near her, and it was not long before their strings crossed and they had to confront each other. There was a painful flush on Nyle's face and it was reflected on Audrey De Vere's.

"I never expected to see you here," Audrey exclaimed, and Nyle uttered, "Neither did I!" in an incoherent way that made both smile.

"I don't go into society now at all," he supplemented. "Miss Atherton's brother is responsible for my appearance here to-night. I could not say no to such an old friend."

"It is hard to refuse an old friend," Nyle said, awkwardly. Oh, why couldn't she think of something to say that would put them both at ease. But she could not.

"I suppose you like society?"

"Oh, yes! very much!" Dear! dear! how cool her tone was.

He gave her a look of reproach, flushed and turned away. She knew he thought her unwilling to have any conversation with him. A new thought assailed her then. Did he know how it was that she was here? She spoke hurriedly:

"Mr. De Vere! You have not mentioned to anyone that you knew me in Mayville?"

"No!" he told her. How the tones of his voice vibrated through her whole being. She wished he would look at her once with the tender eyes of yore and then she would be willing to die. How it came over her now. Oh, the magnetic presence of the man we love.

"No, I have not told anyone," he said again, turning back to disengage the line that was tangled with hers. "Do you not wish me to?"

"Please!" she said, in low tones and flushing scarlet.

"I will not then." And he gave her the glance that made

her heart throb, and, at the same time, pain so. "This will never do!" she told herself. "He is a married man."

Just at that moment a book which had been balanced on on the top of a curtain pole came tumbling about their heads and it was discovered that it was attached to Nyle's line.

"Here is my prize!" Audrey heralded at the same time, alighting on a souvenir of velvet and satin made up into a pretty penwiper, the examination of which caused a little merriment which eased their strained relations.

"My book is by Henry George!" exclaimed his companion with delighted surprise. "Who could have been so thoughtful?"

"Do you read Henry George?"

"Do I read him? Yes! And every one of his colleagues. I wish I could find someone to talk to about his principles, but all my friends laugh at me and my proposed private Anti-poverty society."

"Do you really? Let's sit here and begin at once. I am ready to talk till dawn about it. Do you remember our old talks?"

Did she remember them? Good heavens! It was beginning to be an impossibility to forget them. She felt it was dangerous to remain with him another moment. She stepped down a few steps, away from him.

"Oh, it would—you know—well," she got out at last. "Married people should not sit on the stairs and carry on prolonged conversations. Let us go down in the drawing-room."

"I forgot!" he said, with a sigh. And they went down. That was all this time. But they met again. And this time it was at a "literary evening" in the parlors of Flutterby Terrace itself.

"You may bring any friend you please, Mr. Coleby!" Nyle had told an acquaintance, and lo! he had brought Audrey De Vere. And such an Audrey De Vere! How handsome and aristocratic he did look! She had never seen him so thoroughly the self-possessed gentleman, born to the purple that he seemed to-night, as he moved about, unobtrusively conspicuous though consciously revelling in finding himself again in the old haunts of the upper ten. And what a strange, happy smile he wore. Once when Nyle caught his eyes, she felt afraid of the expression she saw. And her fear embodied itself in her manner when he at last found opportunity to tell her the cause of his smiles.

"I heard something to-day that has given me cause for great happiness. When I met you at the cobweb party I thought it was Mrs. Herbert I was meeting—indeed, you said—"

"Mrs. Herbert!" exclaimed Nyle, flushing, of course. "Did he tell you—he is a rascal!"

"I believe he is. But he has not yet succeeded in separating us. I am so glad, Nyle—"

"Why, what do you mean?" the girl said, looking at him in cold surprise. What was he, any way? Must she have her higher opinions of him once more disproved? Was he a married flirt? She would not encourage him, however. And she added, "Of course it is nice to have mistakes rectified any time. But that does not warrant you in using my first name so familiarly. We can be friends, of course—but not the friends of three months ago."

Audrey looked down. He was more than discomposed. He felt keenly the facts that he was only a book-keeper now, she a moneyed girl.