

"He has a right to feel aggrieved, but probably his pride will make him yield. The Welleses are an older family than the Graces, and Clarence is not a boor, by any means. If it is only a question of money, why, he must help Clarence to make it."

John looked keenly at the old lady and divined that her judgment had been tempered with.

"Have you ever seen this Louise?" asked Aunt Hannah.

"Yes; she is very handsome and gay."

"More so than Miss Hogarth?"

"Miss Hogarth is not handsome, she is not gay either," returned John crossly. He was greatly "put out" by what had occurred, and poor Aunt Hannah knew not what to say now beyond: "Well, it is done, and can't be undone."

"That is just the worst of it. Hitherto Clarence has 'done' what suited his own sweet will, and often has he got into pretty pickles that few knew about; but some way and by somebody's aid he has been able to undo.' Now the poor, extravagant, wild, undisciplined boy has taken a wife until with them 'do part.' She has started out by showing herself wickedly ungrateful, as well as deceitful, toward father and mother. I fancy we will not find her a desirable member of our family."

"Why, really, John, you are terribly severe. They have done very wrong, but 'charity never faileth,' you know. We must remember they are young."

"I am not so many years older than he, and I don't want to assume to be uncommonly virtuous, but I would steal no rich man's daughter, forcing him to take me as a dependent on his bounty, or forcing her to forego luxury and endure privations for my sake."

"If a woman loved you, John, it would not be 'privation' to give up luxuries and have only comforts—and you."

A sudden gleam passed over the young fellow's face, and he answered in a gentler tone: "Very true, other things being equal; only I would not ask such a girl to marry me, and if she would cheat her parents to come to me I never would have her."

"Will Clarence bring his wife here when he comes back do you suppose?"

"I think he must; he has no money for a separate establishment."

Not a thought passed through the elder brother's mind that Clarence, from being a burden himself the greater part of the time, had brought a double load on John's shoulders. He would have

warmly welcomed a poor wife, honorably won, had his brother desired one.

Two days later came a letter, full of quips and quirks, from Clarence. He was in the best of spirits, was sure the "pater" and "mater" would "see the thing in the right light, and do the 'bless you, my children, act' all in good time." He told of the admiration excited everywhere by Louise, and in ending confessed that, owing to circumstances in the shape of a pocket-book rapidly depleting, they might be expected home Saturday. If, however, they received a cheque from the father-in-law, with prompt forgiveness, they might prolong their holiday.

John had scarcely finished reading the letter, and had not communicated its contents to Aunt Hannah, when a carriage clattered up to the door. Two sleek men in green and silvery livery sat on the box. The black horses pawed the pavement, their dainty sides shining in the sunshine. The old man who got out of the carriage to ring the Welles' doorbell was almost overlooked by the astounded maid, who, during her *regime*, had seen no stylish callers. John knew him for Mr. Grace before he entered the parlor with the coldest bow possible to the stiffest spine.

With prompt self-control and entire dignity John checked his visitor's indignation by professing his ignorance of the whole affair until too late to interfere, while he made it plainly known that his own disapproval was most emphatic.

Mr. Grace believed him, but the interview was one of the iciest. He begged John to make known to Clarence that the Grace family hereafter were ignorant of his existence; that as for his daughter Louise he disinherited her once and for ever. She had made her choice and she might abide by it. John heard him in silence. Pride prompted him once to let the old man know that a Welles was as good as a Grace any day; then pride held him back lest he seem trying to placate money by offering "blue blood" in exchange. Most bitter of all, away down in John's heart, struggling with the love he certainly had for this brother of his, was the fear that after all he was not a Welles worthy of the name. The visit was brief; scarcely five minutes had gone before the prancing horses and the green and silver livery had vanished, giving place to the usual ash-carts, draymen, and omnibuses.

That evening, as quietly as possible, John told his father that Clarence had married a daughter of Hiram Grace.