

Next morning, as Alice Grover sat watching the children playing on the sands, she heard a light springy step near her, and turning her head slightly encountered the eyes of the tall elegantly dressed stranger of the morning previous.

"Good morning, Miss Grover," he said, composedly, lifting his hat as he spoke. "I feel privileged to speak to you as an old acquaintance, as I knew your mother years ago. My name is Dalton, Harold Dalton."

"I think I have heard my mother speak of you," said Alice, looking up with a bright smile, such as Psyche's might have been when Cupid waked her with a kiss.

Mr. Dalton sat down beside her and quietly continued. "It was on this spot that I first met your mother, and we often sat here and talked. I was a romantic young fellow then, not much older than you are now. Your mother—" He paused and looked intently at the bright young face beside him. Then in a gentle tone he went on: "Your mother, if she had thought as much of me as I thought of her—well, you would have been our daughter in that case."

For a few moments Alice was silent. Then said: "Are you married, too?"

"No," he replied. "I was always intended to be an old bachelor; and, besides, I have lived abroad many years, and a foreign wife does not appeal to me."

"I have always thought I should like to go abroad," said Alice.

have not met my aunt, have you, Mr. Dalton?"

"No, I wanted to meet you first. Now I want to meet her, and become one of the family if I may, for I find that there is no one left who belongs to me. May I become your bachelor uncle?"

"That would be pleasant, I am sure," said Alice with a little laugh. "Let us go and see her."

Alice found her new bachelor uncle as good company as she at first anticipated. In fact, all who met him voted him as charming.

As for Harold Dalton, the past receded from view in the full sunshine of the present. Alice Grover was so like the Alice Clyde he had loved in olden days that he often almost forgot that the present was not the past; forgot the difference between his age and hers—almost hoped that all the past was a dream, and that the present was all that was reality.

He had returned to America a wealthy man, to find that his old love was dead, and that this young girl was all that was left of the past. It was his native land, but he had in it no other ties. Alice Clyde had been dearly loved by him; but she had jilted him, to marry a man with more money than he possessed. Harold Dalton was much too reasonable a man to idolize for a life-time a girl in which he had seen so grave a fault, although he had through her influence remained a bachelor.

While he was greatly drawn toward Alice Grover, he would have laughed at the idea of his falling in love with her,



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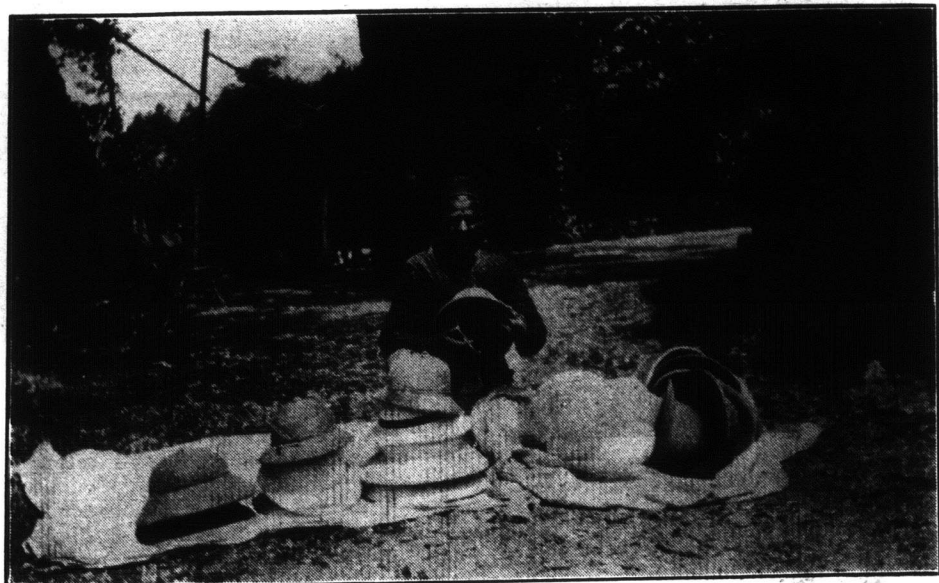
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"Americans have the special privilege of so doing," said Dalton. "You see, other people for the most part are born abroad, and cannot realize what real travel means. So you have not yet crossed the ocean?"

"No, I have never been on the sea. Father did not care to go while he lived, and after he died Mamma could not go."

"Well, the good of travel respects only the mind. Who was it said that? Emerson, I think. So we do not need to depend altogether on railroads and steamboats to see the world by."

"If we never moved ourselves, do you think our minds would really move either?"

"Where would you most wish to go?"

"To London, Rome, Egypt."

"Why?"

"Because my mind has been to those places often, but I feel that I can never realize what they are like until I see the places I have so frequently read about."

"Is there any part of the world to which you are drawn by heart-desires?"

Alice thought a while, and then said: "The beautiful places everywhere appeal to me strongly."

"That is easy to believe," Mr. Dalton said.

"There is a great deal of beauty here," he added.

"Yes, but the cottages have spoiled much of it."

"Then you remember the old farmhouse as it used to be?"

"Yes, Mamma used to bring me here every year after my father died. My aunt has a cottage here now. You

or anyone else, for that matter. But a girl of eighteen! Why, it was unthinkable that he, a confirmed bachelor and man of the world, could fall in love with her. No, he liked her, and felt benevolently towards her. He would find great pleasure in seeing her married to some young man who was worthy of her.

Yet he found himself daily more engrossed in her companionship; restless when away from her; constantly thinking of her. He began to be a stern critic of himself, and found to his astonishment that his feelings were far from those of the benevolent uncle toward his niece.

So he loved her! Now, did she love him? Here was the problem to be solved. She was very young. He must act warily, and not wound her. So he planned to test her heart.

He came to her to tell her that he must remain away from a picnic they had planned. She appeared genuinely disappointed and dejected, but that, though hopeful, was not proof-positive.

One day he picked up a pretty little shell, as they were strolling together on the beach. He gave it to her, and soon afterwards saw her wearing it on a ribbon. Another good sign, though it might mean nothing.

Sometimes he thought her eyes met his oftener, and that she listened to his conversation more than to that of other people.

Still, when he attempted any more pointed attentions, she seemed to avoid him. So he began to think that she felt friendly toward him more on her mother's account than on her own—that she was good to him because she knew

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