

Our Farm Homes

THE importance of a home it is impossible to exaggerate. What is liberty without it? What is education in schools without it? The greatness of no nation can be secure that is not based upon a pure home life.—Arnold Toynbee.

The Major's Daughter

The blue waves lashed musically along the beach at Hull, leaving the long stretches of white sands gemed with sparkling shells in a sinuous sloping roadway as far as the eye could reach. The boats were coming in from Boston, their upper decks covered with striped canopies and crowded with humanitarians anxious to escape the city's heat for the night in the hotels and cottages at Hull or at Nantasket Beach.

The verandas of the hotel Pemberton at Hull held a gay assemblage of summer pleasure seekers. Some of them were engaged in playing games and others strolled to and fro on the verandas, listening to the strains of the orchestra through the open windows of the ballroom.

"Only another day of it," sighed Harold Robertson, "and then I go back to my dingy office for another year. I shan't see you any more, for I know your father would forbid me to visit you."

"Papa is not so hard-hearted," said the girl to whom the young man was speaking, and she swung her broad-brimmed sailor hat back and forth by its ribbons. "He was once poor himself and ought not to dislike you for being a beginner in your profession."

"Perhaps he ought not, but such men—successful, rich men like he is always want their daughters to marry well-to-do men."

The girl's pretty face held a pouting expression and her large blue eyes filled. "Well, if you don't love me any more than to be afraid to go to him manfully and—ask him for me—then your love isn't worth much."

"Don't talk that way, Dorothea," burst out the young man, and for an instant his handsome face was clouded. "You know you are sure of my love. You know, moreover, that even if you do go and marry the man your mother seems to favor so much, because of his gigantic prospects, I shall be just as true to you as ever; I have never loved before and I shall never love again."

"I know it, dear," the girl answered huskily. "Let's go down to the beach, Mamma will be here in a minute and whisk me away to meet him. I hate him; I detest him. Do you suppose I shall ever marry him when—when my whole heart is yours? The poorer you are the more I care for you. The face of the young man shone with joy as he led her down the steps to the beach. For a long time they walked on the sands without speaking. He broke the silence as he took her slender, white hand to

help her over a piece of driftwood. "Yes, I am sure of defeat," he said, "but I shall go to him to-morrow and tell him the truth. He cannot blame me for loving you, and even if he kicks me out of the house—"

"Papa will treat you like a gentleman," interrupted the girl. "You need not be afraid of that. He has never treated any human being rudely. He—he may refuse; I do hope he won't—but he will not make you feel bad. He was a soldier, you know, and reached the rank of Major."

"But he was on the Union side while my father fought on the other."

"That will make no difference," replied the girl; "he always admired the courage of the southern soldiers. Did I ever tell you? He has the portrait of a human being in our library at home. It was a man who dragged him away from the track of an exploding shell when my father lay wounded, almost unconscious, on the field at Chickamauga. They did not exchange any words, for papa fainted immediately after he was taken to a place of safety. His rescuer dropped the photograph near him and the men, thinking that it belonged to papa, put it into his pocket before taking him to the hospital. My father came across it one day while he was convalescing and recognized it as the picture of his rescuer. He carried it with him through the rest of the war hoping to identify the man by it and express his gratitude to him. But he never heard of him and since the war he has had the picture made in oil, and it has become one of Papa's treasures. It is the first of our paintings which he shows to visitors, and he always relates the story with emotion; so you see my father is not without a heart, and has no prejudice against the south."

"I am glad to hear what you have told me," said Robertson, "for I can approach him more easily."

"Ah, there is Mamma on the veranda, and she is signalling to me," cried the girl in a tone of disappointment. "Now, it will be supper, and then I shall have to listen to that fellow's forced compliments through the evening."

"I don't wish any harm to him, but I can't help being glad of your dislike to him," said her companion with a dry laugh. "Suppose it is natural. But can't I get a word with you to-night in the ball-room?"

"No," if you did, then Mamma would not let me see you in the morning before you go, and I should die of disappointment if I did not have that opportunity."

"All right, then; your mother is

coming to meet us. I presume I shall have to talk to the old maid sister of my employer. He told me to look out for her. That's what it is to be poor."

Mrs. Huntington was now within a few yards of them.

"I believe Mamma knows I—I care for you," said Dorothea, in a low tone.

"Why do you think so?"

"From the way she talks about you. Then, a woman can always read another's man's heart. She would favor more than Papa, for she once had an unhappy love affair herself."

"Where have you young people been?" asked the old lady. "I have been all around the house looking for you. I had no idea, Dorothea, that you would come on the beach in those thin shoes so late in the afternoon. Can't you feel how chilly it has become?"

"I have only been here a few minutes, Mamma," said the girl. "Mr. Robertson and I have been for the greater part of the afternoon on the veranda, listening to the music."

"Well, I'm glad of it; it doesn't look well for couples to seem to be anxious to be alone together, unless they are known to be engaged."

"We can let them know it then," said Dorothea, suddenly, "for we are. It amounts to the same thing." "Oh," cried Mrs. Huntington, drawing back, and stopping in sheer astonishment. Even the young man was surprised at the girl's unexpected announcement, and her pale, determined face, as she turned abruptly on her mother.

"Yes, we have promised to love each other for all time, Mamma, and I am tired of keeping it from you, and having you thrust me on that Mr. Stempel. This is the last night I shall see Mr. Robertson, can spend at Hull this season, and I want to talk to him this evening undisturbed by anyone else."

"Well, I never," gasped Mrs. Huntington, dropping into a collogism, in her astonishment.

"Don't forget what you once told me about how you never forgave your parents for interfering in your heart affair, and remember that I am now placed as you were then. I love Harold, and never shall care for anyone else. I'd rather be dead than marry a man that I don't love."

Mrs. Huntington was speechless. She got out her handkerchief, and began to wipe her eyes.

"I hope you won't be hard on us, Mrs. Huntington," began the young man, but he went no further, for Mrs. Huntington had begun to speak.

"It is your father, Dorothea," she whispered, "the seed of anxiety for you to like Mr. Stempel. I can't say I would oppose Mr. Robertson, for I have liked him from the first, and—I and I have suspected that you were beginning to love each other. But Mr. Huntington would never give his consent. He believes in fortune playing a part in such matters."

"There is nothing left for me to do, but to go to him like a man, and propose for Dorothea's hand. If he refuses, I shall have done all that there was to do," said the young man, hesitatingly.

Mrs. Huntington was still wiping her eyes. "When will you see him?" she asked.

"To-morrow, as soon as I can reach him after arriving in the city."

"You had better go to our house about ten in the morning, then," suggested Mrs. Huntington. "I don't like to think of him refusing you, and he will be in a better humor then; he usually is in the morning."

"Mamma, you might write him a note; it would serve to introduce Harold, and pave the way for what he has to say. You know it will be an awfully hard thing to do. Papa is so serious and gruff-looking."

"—I never could do that," replied Mrs. Huntington, "but if you wish, Mr. Robertson, you may tell him I have no serious objections."

"Thank you, you are very kind," said the young man, and the trio went up the steps to the veranda, which was thronged with promenaders.

"Am I to see him to-night, Mamma?" asked the girl in a whisper.

"I suppose so, darling," replied Mrs. Huntington; "I may be doing very wrong, but I can't help myself; I was young myself once."

So that night chaperoned by good Mrs. Huntington, Harold Robertson sat on the veranda in the moonlight, with Dorothea, while Mr. Richard Stempel, and his sister, Mrs. Wilson, passed dolefully, even angrily to and fro in their vicinity. And it was ten o'clock before Mrs. Huntington proposed retiring.

The next morning after bidding Dorothea good-bye on the wharf, Harold Robertson took the boat for Boston. Somehow the kindness of Dorothea's mother had made him look forward to a meeting with Major Huntington more courageously than he had hoped, so taking a cab when the city was reached, he drove direct to his house on Beacon street.

"Is Major Huntington at home?" he asked the servant in livery.

"Yes," replied the man.

Harold sat down in the library.

"Presumption, presumption," he said to himself, as he looked about the room at the exquisite furniture, rare paintings and bric-a-brac. "He will think I have lost my mind; well, I have and my heart, also; so here goes."

There was a step in the carpeted hall. Harold's heart sank like a plummet. It was only the servant returning to ask: "Is the business very important?"

"Very important," replied Harold.

In a moment the Major entered.

"Pardon me for keeping you waiting, sir," he said, as he grasped Harold's hand with the cordiality of a man of the world, desiring to make his visitor feel at home under his roof. "My servant informs me that your business is urgent. I was just starting in to dictate a letter to my stenographer, but she can wait."

"I am sorry to disturb you," stammered the young man. "The fact is that my call is on such a—delicate, personal matter, and I shall have to depend so much on your indulgence, that perhaps it would be better to wait till you can give me more of your time."

"Oh, no, let it out, now that you are here," said Major Huntington, genially. "I've got the day before me."

"I think I may say that I come to you, with the approval of your wife," began Harold. "She said that I might say to you that she had no objections to your granting my request. The truth is, I had the honor of meeting your daughter, Miss Huntington, at Hull, last year, and again this season. We have seen a good deal of each other, and—" The young man could go no further.

"You have fallen in love with her," suggested the Major.

"Yes, and she assures me that my regard is reciprocated, with Mrs. Huntington's consent, I have come to beg your permission to allow me to marry her."

The face of the major had flushed with vexation.

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