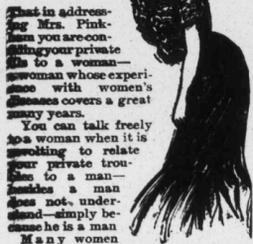


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UNCLE TERRY.

was becoming decidedly monotonous. When Albert had written regarding the invitation the Nasons had extended, she believed it was due solely to Frank's influence, and when that young man tried to obtain her consent to join a yachting party, providing his mother and sister decided to go, she was morally sure of it. But it made no difference, for if the supposedly aristocratic Mrs. Nason had sent her a written invitation she was the last person in the world to accept it. To go out of her way for the possible opportunity of allowing the only son of a rich family to pay court to her was not characteristic of Alice Page. Rather a thousand times would she teach school in single blessedness all her life than be considered as putting herself in the way of a probable suitor. Of her own feelings toward Frank she was not at all sure. He was a good looking young fellow and no doubt stood well socially. At first she had felt a little contempt for him, due to his complaints that he had hard work to kill time. When she received the letter announcing his determination to study law and become a useful man in the world she thought better of him. When he came up in June it became clear that he was in love with her. So self evident were his feelings that she at that time felt compelled to avoid giving him a chance to express them. Her heart was and always had been entirely free from the pangs of love, and while his devotion was in a way quite flattering, the one insurmountable barrier was his family. Had he been more diplomatic he would never have told her his mother frowned at him when he danced twice with a poor girl.

"I am a poor girl," Alice thought, when he made the admission, "but I'll wear old clothes all my life before his haughty mother shall read him a lecture for dancing twice with me." Ever since the day Mrs. Nason had related the village gossip to her she had thought a good many times about the cause of it, but to no one had she mentioned the matter. Her only associate, good natured Abby Miles, had never dared to speak of it, and Aunt Susan was wise enough not to.

Now that Frank and his fashionable sister were coming to Sanguate, Alice felt a good deal worried. Firstly, she knew her own stock of gowns was inadequate. While not vain of her looks, she yet felt his sister would consider her countrified in dress or else realize the truth that she was painfully poor. She had made the money her brother gave her go as far as possible. Her own small salary was not more than enough to pay current expenses. When the day and train arrived, and she had ushered her two guests to their rooms, her worry began. A trunk had come, and as she busied herself to help Aunt Susan get supper under way before she changed her dress she was morally sure Miss Nason would appear in a gown fit for a state dinner. But when she was dressed and went out on the porch, where her guests were, she found Miss Blanch attired in a white muslin, severe in its simplicity. It was a pleasant surprise, and at no time during their stay did Alice consider herself poorly clad. During the conversation that evening Blanch gave an interesting description of her life in the mountains, who were there, what gowns the ladies wore, the hops, drives, tennis, croquet and whist games, and when that topic was exhausted Alice turned to Frank and said, "Now, tell us about your trip."

"There is not much to tell," he answered in a disappointed tone. "The fact is, my yachting trip was a failure. I had a two weeks' trip all mapped out, no end of stores on board, and anticipated lots of fun, but it didn't materialize. The second day Bert got left on the island, and we didn't find him until the next day. In the meantime he had found a pretty girl and acted as if he had become smitten with her. Then we ran to Bar Harbor, and the rest of the boys found some girls they knew and decided that a gander cruise had lost its charms. So I threw up my hands and turned the Gypsy over to Bert, and for all I know or care he is using her to entertain his island fairy."

Alice joined with Blanch in a good laugh at Frank's description of his trip. When the chitchat slowed down Alice said: "I don't know how to entertain you two good people in this dull place. There are mountains and woods galore and lots of pretty drives. And," looking at Frank, "I know where there is a nice mill pond full of lilies and an old moss covered mill and a miller that looks like a picture in story books. There is also a drive to the top of the mountain, where the view is simply grand. I have a steady going and faithful old horse, and we will go whenever you like."

"Do not worry about me, Miss Page," replied Blanch. "If I can see mountain and woods I am perfectly happy." When the evening was nearing its close Frank begged Alice to sing, but she declined. "Do you play or sing, Miss Nason?" she asked innocently.

"Oh, please don't be afraid of me," was the answer. "I never touched a piano in my life. Once in awhile I join in the chorus, as they say, for my own amusement and the amazement of others, but that is all."

It wasn't all, for she played the guitar and sang sweetly. Finally Alice was persuaded to open the piano, and then out upon the still night air there floated many an old time ballad. After that she played selections from a few of the latest light operas that Frank had sent her and then turned away. "Oh, don't stop now," exclaimed both her guests at once. "Sing a few more songs." Then, with almost an air of proprietorship, Frank arose and, going to the piano, searched for and found a well worn song. Without a word he opened it and placed it on the music rack. It was "Bea Boff!" A faint

(To be continued.)

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