

think as he approaches, what he has thought so many times before, how faultlessly lovely Marie Landelle is. Her beauty is so great that it comes upon a beholder, though he shall see her a dozen times a day, always as a sort of surprise.

Was Helen of Troy as beautiful? Was the woman for whom Marc Antony lost a world as peerless? No, she was brown, and middle-aged, and coarse. It is not for such fair and frail flower faces that men have gone mad and worlds have been lost and won.

She is lying back languid in the sultry heat, dressed in white, her broad-brimmed sun hat in her lap, her gold red hair falling loosely over her shoulders as usual. Young Dexter is lying on the grass at her feet, all his speechless adoration in his uplifted eyes. He scowls darkly as Longworth draws near. Close by sits Miss Hariott, fanning herself. Inside in the dusk parlour Madlle. Reine is playing for them softly. Through the parted curtains he can catch a glimpse of a black gauzy dress, of a stately little dark head, and some long, lemon-coloured beads in hair and belt.

Which of the sisters held his heart? The ideal beauty or the real woman?

CHAPTER XV.

AT THE PICNIC.

"Will somebody introduce me to this gentleman?" inquires Miss Hariott, as Laurence Longworth makes his appearance. "Nine whole days have elapsed since these eyes beheld him. Who can be expected to keep a friend in remembrance all that time?"

"Who, indeed!" says Longworth, "especially when the 'who' is a lady. Mademoiselle Marie, I salute you. Frank, whence this moody frown? May I seat myself beside you, Miss Hariott? The grass is damp, the dews are falling, else would I stretch myself, as my young kinsman is doing, at beauty's feet, defy rheumatics, and sun myself in its smiles. Mrs. Windsor is well, I hope, Miss Landelle?"

"I think grandmamma must always be well," responds Madlle. Marie, with one of her faint, sweet smiles—she rarely gets beyond smiles. "I cannot

imagine her weak or ailing. She wonders sometimes, as Miss Hariott does, why you never come to see her."

"Tremendously busy," says Longworth. "Of all merciless tyrants commend me to the reading public when a popular trial is going on."

"How goes the trial, Longworth?" inquires Frank. He is interested, but not to the point of attending. "They'll find her guilty, I suppose?"

"They can't very well find her anything else, since half a dozen people saw her shoot him; but she'll be strongly recommended to mercy. She killed him, but she served him right!"

"Dangerous doctrine, Laurence," says Miss Hariott. "How does the poor creature stand it?"

"She appears half dazed. I wonder you don't go to see her, Miss Hariott. The poor needs a friendly word. It is hard lines for her just at present."

"Go to see a murderess!" exclaims Marie, in faint horror.

Longworth lifts his thoughtful eyes. The music has ceased, and the black, gauzy dress and long, lemon-coloured beads are at the window.

"Why not?" he says. "Good evening, Mademoiselle Reine. Miss Hariott visits much worse people than poor Kate Blake every week of her life, but not one who need a woman's presence—a woman's words—more than she. She wasn't half a bad girl, although she shot Allingham. Will you go, Miss Hester? I can obtain you admittance?"

"Yes, I will go," Miss Hariott says, slowly, and Longworth gives her a grateful glance.

She has shrunk a little at first; there is something terribly repugnant in the thought of facing a murderess. But she is a thoroughly good and charitable woman, Longworth knows, as all the poor people of North Baymouth know, and when she does go, Kate Blake will have found a comforter and true friend.

"What nice, enlivening subjects Longworth always starts," cries Frank, ironically. "For a Death's-head at any feast, commend me to the editor of the *Phenix*. I think we must ask him to our picnic, Mademoiselle Marie. If our spirits rise to any very boisterous degree of happiness, his pleasant remarks