

as if opposition was being manifested, and as Mabel afterwards learned, a strange, enthusiastic clergyman, named Brace, had spoken, and demonstrated that the drinking habits of the people and their miserable homes, were the cause of the moral destitution of the district. He was interrupted and called to order, and sat down without saying all that he had intended. A friend of his rose and very warmly pursued the argument, stating that the working-classes spent every week more in beer only, not to name spirits, than would pay for the education of every child in the district. On this Mr. Veering rose to suggest, that he believed they were there to speak of practical matters, and not Utopian theories. He liked to be practical, and then went into a dissertation to prove that the want of the age was earnestness. And like most of the professors of that favorite creed (not excepting the great Thomas himself), having uttered it, he proceeded to demolish every form of earnestness that involved any self-sacrifice in its supporters. However, his interposition did good service, and the meeting ended amicably with the establishment of a ragged-school. The wealthy brothers left radiant with benevolence. Some few discontented hearers mourned that the effects only of sin and folly were dealt with, and the causes left untouched. The mass were pleased that rich gentlemen and members of parliament should have come there, and the tavern and beer-shop keepers of the district had no reason to complain: many of course went and drank success to the ragged-school in the founders' beer, one wag trolled a song he had composed, that became popular,—

Here's both tipples and text,  
Jolly toppers, what next  
Will the holy brotherhood furnish?  
Drink each like a man,  
Swallow all that you can,  
Of the orthodox beer of friend Burnish.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Burnish and her party reached home. All were silent—the children from the fear of disturbing their mother, who continued to weep, and Mabel, from being naturally of a meditative temperament. A pressure on the arm, as they entered the hall in Portland Place, indicated to Mabel that Mrs. Burnish wished to speak with her; and, as soon as she had seen the children in the care of their maid, and removed her own bonnet and shawl, she went to Mrs. Burnish's room, who exclaimed, as she entered—

“Oh, how changed! I wonder I recognized him! I should not but for you looking so fixedly in that direction, and the sunbeam falling so full on his eyes—why he looks an old man.”

“Who, dear madam?” said Mabel surprised.

“Why, the gentleman I saw you looking at—my poor lost brother.”

“What, that haggard man, with his hat drawn down over his face?” replied Mabel, her surprise compelling a plain speech.

“Yes, Miss Alerton,” said Mrs. Burnish, haughtily. “that ‘haggard man,’ as you call him, was the handsomest, the cleverest, the most perfect gentleman that ever entered a drawing room. His misfortunes, I see, have quite broken him down, and there's no pity in this world for a poor gentleman.”

“Pardon me, dear Mrs. Burnish,” said Mabel, blushing deeply, and really grieved that she had wounded the most sensitive part of Mrs. Burnish's nature, “your description had not prepared me to see a gentleman in such delicate health; but, now I have seen him, I shall easily recognize him; and, therefore all difficulty as to that is over. I will take an early tea with the children, and go by seven o'clock to the garden.”

This willingness to fulfil her commission soothed Mrs. Burnish, who opened her desk, and began writing, as Mabel went to join her pupils.

If fatigue and headache might be pleaded as an excuse for not taking a long walk, the governess and children, who had been heated and tired by the meeting, might have made it. Indeed, when at six o'clock, Mabel, with her young charge, went out, and told them, as if it were a treat, that they were to walk to Kensington Gardens, the little creatures did not seem particularly pleased, and petitioned to go their usual walk instead, so that Mabel was fain to walk down Langham Place and take a cab. The children entered first, and Mabel did not notice that, as she was getting in, Mr. Delamere Burnish passed. In a clear voice, Mabel told the man to drive to Kensington Garden Gate, Hyde Park Gardens, and little Kate, to make all sure, repeated it after her, so that the words floated to the ear of Mr. Delamere, who stood on the pavement, looking at them, and wondering greatly at their choice of so distant a walk on that evening, after the meeting. He took a few paces homewards, when a sudden resolve made him turn back, call a cab, and drive in the same direction. But he had a jaded horse, and did not manage to keep up with the cab. He was, of course, full of thought about Miss Alerton and the letter, and he felt, come what might, he must have an explanation with her. However, when he reached the gardens, to his annoyance, neither Miss Alerton nor his little sisters were visible.

Mabel had sped swiftly to her destination, and the first object she saw was the poor invalid, seated under a tree, apparently deeply engaged in reading a newspaper, yet, every now and then, looking over it in the direction of the gate. The little girls' spirits revived as they ran within the gardens, and were for going immediately forward. Mabel, however, turned to the left, and, when she reached the tree, she said, “Miss Burnish, come into

this walk, and bring your sister with you.” The quick ear of child-hood detected something peculiar in the voice and manner of Mabel.

“What have we done, dear Miss Alerton, and why do you call me Miss Burnish?” said Emily, coming with a run towards her governess. Mabel blushed before the children, and felt that their mother had set her a very awkward task, but she saw that the stranger had let fall his paper, and was looking at her earnestly, and shifted his seat nearer to where she was standing. “Run on, my dears, and enjoy yourselves,” said Mabel, drawing a book from her pocket, as was often the custom when she walked of an evening. The little girls bounded off, and were soon busy with their race. Mabel turned back a moment, but her heart failed her—she could not find words to address the stranger. The whole plan was a work for which she felt unfitted; so with a beating heart she strolled after the children, who by this time were running through a distant clump of trees. Mabel saw that the stranger had risen and was following her, she lingered to give him time to come up with her. He was soon at her side, and lifting his hat, said, with great deference of manner, “Pardon me, madam, the two little girls, your companions, are the children of Mr. Theophilus Burnish?”

Mabel replied in the affirmative, and added. “Your name, sir, is, I believe?”

“Boon,” said he.

“I am charged,” rejoined Mabel, “with a small packet from Mrs. Burnish, whose health is feeble, as you saw to-day, and who cannot have the plea—the consolation rather of an interview at present. She is unequal to walking the distance, and to bring her carriage and servants might, she feared, be injudicious—her letter, however, doubtless, explains all that better than I can.” By this time Mabel, who continued walking, had reached the clump of trees. The children, she thought, had run beyond them, when, just as in a shady spot, she drew the packet from her pocket, and gave it to Mr. Boon, little Kate jumped from behind a large tree, saying, “I've caught her.” The child stopped suddenly, half-frightened at seeing a man whose back was towards her, taking something from Mabel.

“Ah! and see, who do you think I've found?” said Emily's voice at a little distance, and she appeared leading Mr. Delamere captive, just as the stranger walked hastily out of the plantation at the opposite side, and Mabel, with her face blushing scarlet, stood confronting the little girl, and looking much more foolish and like a detected culprit than Delamere had thought possible.

The thoughts of the child, however, flew off directly she saw her eldest brother approach, with Emily jumping as she clung to his arm. The little girls joined in their laughter and caresses, but Delamere had caught a faint glimpse of the retreating form, and had now a full view of Mabel's confused countenance. The reason of the visit to the gardens was all as clear to him as jealousy could make it. “Of course she had come there to meet her suitor. The letter contained a truth—she was engaged.”

“I beg your pardon, Miss Alerton,” he said testily; “I fear I have intruded unseasonably.”

Mabel bowed stiffly, resenting the tone of his remarks, and replied, “Meeting your sisters, Mr. Delamere, is not an intrusion. I'm sure they seem pleased.”

“If it alters any of your plans, it may be an annoyance.”

“My plans, sir! I don't understand you,” hastily responded Mabel.

“Run on Emily and Kate, I'll give you a minute and then catch you,” said he—and as the little girls flew away he exclaimed earnestly—

“Pardon me, Miss Alerton, but I thought—nay, your countenance assures me you were not alone, and therefore that my coming is an intrusion.”

“Indeed, sir!” replied Mabel proudly, “I do not know by what authority you constitute yourself a judge of my actions, or any interpreter of my looks.”

“Oh! don't speak so coldly. It is far from my thoughts to offend or wound you. My heart would plead my apology, dear Miss Alerton. Only tell me that I may hope—that my love—”

At this moment the little girls, hand in hand ran back saying, “Delamere! you don't run, it isn't fair,” and his declaration was broken off, but not before it had assumed a form that permitted, nay necessitated further explanation. Mabel, much agitated, leaned against a tree, and was greatly relieved when, scampering off with the children, he left her a few moments to regain her composure. In the distance, near the gate, she thought she distinguished the thin, retreating form of Mr. Boon. The consciousness of appearing to act a disingenuous part, and the latent wish to stand high in the estimation of Delamere, of which she was hardly aware, adding to the emotion his sudden declaration could not fail to produce, all created a tumult of feeling that required no small effort to control. Nor indeed can it be said Mabel succeeded very well. She calmed all outward manifestation, but her manner was stiff and unnatural when Delamere and his sisters returned. “We came too late, dear Miss Alerton,” said Emily, “let us come here again some time soon when we are not so tired.” To this hint for their return Mabel gladly acceded, and they commenced their walk homeward along the park and through the squares, Mr. Delamere Burnish walking by their side until they came to Cavendish Square, where he met