

asking my father's approval, and from what she heard of him she feared he would never consent to my marrying a poor student, and she urged an immediate union. But I persisted in writing to my father, who answered immediately, forbidding me to think of young Dunlap, ordering me to go home, and saying he always intended me for John Castwell, a neighbour of ours—a millionaire—a booby—a fool—whom I hated as I did poison.

'Not long after the receipt of this letter I was surprised by the sudden appearance of Uncle Bertram, who had come at my father's request to take me home. This roused me at once. My father was a tyrant, I said, and I would let him know I could do as I pleased. In my excitement, I fancied I could not exist a moment without Richard Dunlap, while he declared that life would be a blank for him if passed away from me. At this moment Mrs. Le Vert suggested that we be married immediately—that very night. Uncle Bertram fortunately was a clergyman, and could officiate as well as any other. In justice to Richard, I will say that he hesitated longer than I did—but he was persuaded at last, as was Uncle Bertram, and with no other witness than Mrs. Le Vert and a white woman who lived with her as half waiting-maid and half companion, we were married.'

Rosamond was interested now, and forgetting to remove her dress, she threw a crimson shawl around her shoulders, and sitting down upon the bed, exclaimed, 'Married! You married! Why, then, are you called Porter?'

'Listen and you shall know,' returned the lady, a dark look setting down upon her face.

'Scarcely was the ceremony over, when I began to regret it—not because I disliked Richard, but because I dreaded my father's displeasure, for he had a most savage, revengeful temper, and his daughter possesses the same.' This was bitterly spoken, and she continued—'Hardly an hour after we were married, a negro brought a letter to Richard from an eccentric old man for whom he had been named. In it the old man said he had made his namesake his heir, provided he did not marry until he was twenty-five.'

'“I know just how frolickin' you are,” he wrote, “and I know, too, how unsuitable and how unhappy most early marriages are—so my boy, if you want Sunnyside, wait till you are twenty-five before you take an extra rib. I hate to be bothered with letters, and if you don't answer this, I shall conclude that you accept my terms.”'

'Mrs. Le Vert at once suggested that, as the old gentleman had already had two fits of

apoplexy, and would undoubtedly soon have the third, our marriage should for a time be kept a secret.'

'But he didn't consent,' cried Rosamond.

'Yes, he did,' answered Miss Porter, 'and though I, too, said it would be best, I began to distrust him from that moment—to think that he preferred money to myself. Uncle Bertram promised secrecy and went back alone, and then commenced a life of wretchedness, which makes me shudder even to recall it. With the exception of my own servant, who dared not tell if I bade her be silent, the blacks knew nothing of our marriage, and though we lived together as man and wife, so skillfully did Mrs. Le Vert and Esther, her white domestic manage the matter, that for a time our secret was safely kept. A few of the negroes discovered it ere I left; but as they always lived in that out-of-the-way place, it never followed me, and to this day no human being in Florida, save Uncle Bertram, knows of the marriage.'

'I am very impulsive, and the excitement being over, my affections began to cool. Richard could have kept it alive had he tried, but he did not. On the contrary he was alone, and when with me was always tormenting me with conscientious scruples about deceiving “the old man.”'

'Oh, I like him for that,' cried Rosamond, 'I like him for that. Why didn't you let him tell?'

'Because,' returned Miss Porter, 'I had fears that father would disinherit me, and if Richard lost Sunnyside, we should be poor indeed.'

A shadow passed over Rosamond's face, and she said involuntarily, 'I could be happy with Mr. Browning if we were poor.'

'Marie started and answered quickly, 'What has Mr. Browning to do with my story?'

'Nothing, nothing,' returned Rosamond, 'only I was thinking that if you loved Richard as well as I do Mr. Browning, you would not have cared for money.'

'But I didn't,' returned Marie. 'I was mistaken. 'Twas a mere childish fancy. I never loved him. I hate him now.'

She spoke vehemently, and when Rosamond said mournfully, 'Hate your husband?' she replied, 'Yes, more than hate, or I had never come to tell you this: but listen—from indifference we came to coldness—from coldness to recrimination—from that to harsh words—from harsh words to quarrels—and from quarrels to blows!'

She uttered the last word slowly, while Rosamond exclaimed, 'Not blows, Miss Porter! No man would strike a woman. almost hate him, now.'