

you have not yet told me that I may steal Amy from you."

"It is no stealing," replied Mrs. Varcoe, "for I see that she goes of her own accord. But Amy, dear, was it kind to your mother to keep this a secret from me?"

"A secret, mother? What secret do you mean?" Amy asked with a blush.

"Why, that you were in love, as you seem to have been for, goodness me! how long you only can tell, if you would."

"It is no secret now, dear," returned Amy, "and you must remember that the fisherman who has asked me to be his wife did not exist a fortnight ago."

"He was preparing to cast his net, though," said Gilbert, taking a small cubic box of cardboard from his pocket and displaying a circlet of gold with a small gem in the setting. "I wonder will this fit:

let me try. Admirably! They say it is a sign of bondage: Amy, dear, which of us is the thrall?"

"I suppose I am," was her answer, "since it seems I am to carry the symbol."

"How does it feel?" he asked, "burdensome, like the collar of Gurth in the novel?"

"Let me show you:" and Amy pressed the stone upon his forehead, leaving a little star-like indentation of the skin, and thereby provoking Gilbert to a lover's revenge.

"Ah, well," sighed Mrs. Varcoe, "I thought you would find it hard to behave yourselves. Dear me! am I to check off sweethearts' kisses for their stock-in-trade?"

(To be continued.)

NATURE'S FREETHINKER.

—O—

FOR what has he, whose will sees clear,
 To do with doubt and faith and fear,
 Swift hopes, and slow despondencies?
 His heart is equal with the sea's
 And with the sea-wind's, and his ear
 Is level to the speech of these,
 And his soul communes and takes cheer
 With the actual earth's equalities—
 Air, light, and night, hills, winds, and
 streams,—
 And seeks not strength from strengthless
 dreams.

His soul is even with the sun
 Whose spirit and whose eye are one,
 Who seeks not stars by day, nor light
 And heavy heat of day by night.
 Him can no god cast down, whom none
 Can lift in hope beyond the height
 Of fate and nature, and things done
 By the calm rule of might and right
 That bids men be, and bear, and do,
 And die beneath blind skies or blue.

—Swinburne.