

still you would do wrong to encourage it, by a continuance of your kind, encouraging manner."

"What can I do?" said Fan, in a desponding tone. "After all, it is nonsense. I do believe Ernest does like me better than any one here; but then, it is because Blanche loves and clings to me so; and I cannot bear to wound or annoy either of them by coldness or change of manner. Blanche is as sensitive about Ernest; and if I am not always just so cordial to him, the tears come into her glorious eyes, and she asks me what he has done to offend me."

"It is because she sees the strength of his love for you, and she yearns for some proof it is returned. Ah! Fan, don't trifle with him; check it before it gets too strong for him to master it."

"Well, Lizzie dear, I will do just as you say; but do please to tell me what I shall do about that ring? Blanche says, Ernest and Joe came almost to blows, they got into such an angry dispute about it. How am I to get it again? for, come what will, it shall not be seen upon his finger."

"The best way, dear Fan, is calmly to request Joe to give it up. Say to him, that it was your gift to Blanche, and you are not willing it should be in the possession of any one else. He understands you, and you can easily induce him to relinquish it. You know we are to visit Mrs. Jones to-night, and you can have an opportunity then to speak to him."

"I know, Lizzie, if he speaks to me with that ring upon his finger, I shall do some outrageous thing. I cannot answer him with civility, it is so impertinent of him. He knows I hate him."

"Well; just forget your annoyance now, and help me to make this wreath."

It was a brilliant party that night at Mrs. Jones'. Her large house was thrown open; every room well lighted; the pictures wreathed with evergreens, and every nook and corner where they could possibly be placed, was filled with the graceful and odorous flowers of the season. Gay ladies, smiling beans, and demure, business-haunted gentlemen, all collected together to do honor to the distinguished strangers for whom the party was given. All was gaiety, and even Fan seemed to have forgotten her morning's annoyance, though she had said, just before she left home, that the evening should not pass without her getting the ring.

She was standing with a merry group of those who always gathered about her on such occasions, her joyous laugh ringing a clear chime. I was watching her from a little distance, with the indefinable interest I always felt in all she said and did; when, all at once, I saw a change come over

her face. I followed the direction of her eyes, and saw Joe Jones just paying his compliments to the ladies, and evidently directing his steps towards Fan. Involuntarily I glanced at his hands, and saw they were ungloved.

As he approached, Fan drew up her small head with an air of hauteur most unusual to her. He advanced through the circle around her.

"Good evening, Miss Fanny," he said, and he put out his hand towards her. One glance showed her the ring. I never saw such a flash of indignation as kindled over her whole face—such a look of contempt as she bestowed upon him as she rejected his proffered hand. She began to make some cutting remark, when fortunately the bugle sent forth its summons for the quadrille, and one who was standing beside her claimed her hand for the next dance. She absolutely sailed past poor Joe, who quailed beneath her indignant look as I have rarely seen a man quail; but he was young, and did in truth love her. He turned away crest-fallen, and evidently his happiness was gone for that evening.

It was hard, too, for Fan to regain her serenity. She was less bright and lively than usual, though, perhaps, no one but myself could have perceived it. Ernest hovered round her, and she was more than usually kind to him, wishing apparently to mark the difference of feeling between him and Joe. The party was kept up till a late hour. It was the custom, in that simple country place, for the gentlemen to escort the ladies home; and proud were they when they were fortunate enough to secure their favourite one.

I rather dreaded the time for our leaving on this evening, for I was sure Joe would be on the watch for Fan, for he always would pounce upon her if he could; and various were the stratagems she resorted to to elude him, and others always stood ready to aid her, giving her *carte blanche* to consider herself engaged to them for dances or walks, when Joe was too officious.

It was a lovely summer evening, and the light scarf, and roguish peasant-like hat, were soon put on, and, with others, we entered the hall. Ernest was standing near the door, and as Fan came out, he turned to her, and said:

"Miss Fanny, may I—"

When, in a moment, Joe Jones stepped up to him, and with a defying air, said:

"Mr. Morin, Miss Spinyarn wished me to say, she was waiting for you to go home with her."

Poor Ernest! the desponding look he gave at the thought of exchanging a walk with Fan, at the witching hour, for a tramp home with Miss Spinyarn; but there was no redress: his gentle-