

being promoted to the position of an equal, became, in many respects, a real mistress of Riverside, though Mrs. Peters nominally held the reins, and aside from superintending her work, built many castles of the future when her protegee would be a full grown woman and her master still young and handsome!

CHAPTER IV.

ROSAMOND'S EDUCATION.

One year has passed away since Mrs. Van Vechten departed for the South, and up the locust lined avenue which leads to Riverside, the owner of the place is slowly riding. It is not pleasant going home to-night, and so he lingers by the way, wondering why it is that the absence of a child should make so much difference in one's feelings! During the year Rosamond had recited her lessons to him, but with many others he fancied no girl's education could be finished unless she were sent away—and two weeks before the night of which we write he had taken her himself to Atwater Seminary, a distance of more than two hundred miles, and then, with a sense of desolation for which he could not account, he had returned to his home, which was never so lonely before. There was no merry voice within the walls—no tripping feet upon the stairs—no soft, white hand to bathe his forehead when suffering from real or fancied headache—no slippers waiting by his chair—no flowers on the mantel—no bright face at the window—no Rosamond at the door.

Of all this was he thinking that November afternoon, and when at last he reached his home, he went straight to his library, hoping to find a letter there, telling him of her welfare. But letter there was none, and with a feeling of disappointment he started to the parlour. The door was ajar and he caught glimpse of a cheerful blazing fire within the grate. The shutters, too, were open and the curtains were put back just as they used to be when she was there. It seemed like the olden time, and with spirits somewhat enlivened he advanced into the room. His favourite chair stood before the fire, and so near to it that her head was leaning on its arm, sat a young girl. Her back was turned toward him, but he knew that form full well, and joyfully he cried, 'Rosamond, how came you here?'

Amid her smiles and tears, Rosamond attempted to tell him the story of her grievances. She was homesick, and she could not learn half so much at the Atwater Seminary as at home—then too, she hated the straight-

jacket rules, and hated the lady-boarder, who pretended to be sick, and wouldn't let the school girls breathe, especially Rosamond Leyton, for whom she seemed to have conceived a particular aversion.

Pleased as Mr. Browning was to have Rosamond with him again, he did not quite like her reasons for coming back, and he questioned her closely as to the cause of her sudden return.

'I shouldn't have come, perhaps,' said Rosamond, 'if that sick woman hadn't been so nervous and disagreeable. She paid enormous sums for her board, and so Mrs. Lindsay would hardly let us breathe for fear of disturbing her. My room was over hers, and I had to take off my shoes and walk on tip-toe, and even then she complained of me, saying I was rude and noisy, when I tried so hard to be still. I made some hateful remark about her in the hall, which she overheard, and when Mrs. Lindsay scolded me for it, saying she was a very wealthy lady from Florida, and accustomed to every attention at home, I said back some pert things, I suppose, for she threatened to write and tell you, and so I thought I'd come and tell you myself.'

There was a dizzy whirl in Mr. Browning's brain—a pallor about his lips—for a terrible suspicion had flashed upon him, and leaning forward, he said in a voice almost a whisper, 'What was the Florida lady's name?'

'Potter, or Porter—yes, Miss Porter, that was it. But what is the matter? Are you sick?' Rosamond asked, as she saw how white he was.

'Only a sudden faintness. It will soon pass off,' he said. 'Tell me more of her. Did she see you? Were you near her?'

'No,' answered Rosamond. 'She was sick all the time I was there, and did not leave her room. The girls said, though, that she was rather pretty, but had big, black, evil-looking eyes. I don't know why it was, but I felt afraid of her—felt just as though she was my evil genius. I couldn't help it—but you are sick, Mr. Browning—you are pale as a ghost. Lie down upon the sofa, and let me bring the pillows, as I used to do.'

She darted off in the direction of his sleeping-room, unconscious of the voice which called after her, asking if it were not dark in the hall, and bidding her take a light.

'But what does it matter?' he said, as he tottered to the sofa. 'She is not here. Atwater Seminary is two hundred miles away. She can't harm Rosamond now.'

By this time Rosamond came with the