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BY MARION HARLAND.

For perhaps sixty seconds, Hetty, sitting upon the turf by the recumbent Thor, and idly pulling his shaggy hair, reflected, regretfully, upon this certain reflex action; then, as if uttered in her ear, recurred the words: "Where we four might paint, and talk and *live* forever!"

"We four!" Involuntarily, her eye sped from one to another of the group; from May's placid visage and smile ensnared to the robin's nest, to the face framed about by pale-blue cushions,—colorless as wax, the pain-lines effaced by the sweet exaltation oftenest seen upon the forehead and mouth of a dead child—consciousness, relinquishing majesty, of having compassed all that is given to the human creature to know, the full possession of a happy secret to be shared with none who still bear the weight of mortality. Hetty's heart slackened its beat while she gazed upon the motionless features. Her 'child' was, for the time, rapt beyond her reach. Yet it was only "make-believe" after all, that snared her into temporary bliss!

Before the pang of the thought got firm hold of her, she met March Gilchrist's eyes, full, and fixed upon hers.

He lay along the grass, supporting himself on his left elbow, his cheek upon his hand, the other hand, still holding the big brush, had fallen across Thor's back. His eyes were startled, as by an unexpected revelation, and as her glance touched them, sudden, glad light leaped from depth to surface. He would not release her regard—not even when the glow that succeeded the numbness of the thrill stole from limb to limb, and suffused her face, and all the forceful maiden nature battled with the magnetic compulsion. The sough of the spring breeze in the flower-laden branches, likened by Hester to the whispering surf upon island sands; the humming bees and twittering birds; the sun-warmed scent of apple-blooms and white clover and the sweetbrier growing just without the canopy of the king apple-tree; the faint flush of light strained through locked masses of blossoms,—were, for those supreme moments all the world—except that this man—God's most glorious creation—spoke to her, although his lips were moveless, and that the stir of a new and divine life within her heart replied.

"I am sure the time must be up!" said May, yawningly. "Poor Hester is fast asleep, and my tongue aches with holding it so long."

Hester unclosed her eyes slowly, smiled dreamily, and essayed no denial. March was on his knees, collecting brushes and tubes into his color-box. Hetty was folding a rug so much too heavy for her wrists that May sprang to seize the other end.

"Why—are you chilly? Your fingers are like ice!" she exclaimed, as their hands met. "And how you shiver! I am afraid we have been selfish in keeping you out-of-doors so long!"

The ague shook the mirth out of the nervous laugh with which Hetty answered.

"Now that the strain of the week's suspense and sittings is over, and the result of our joint labors is a pronounced success, I am a little tired. The spring is a trifle crude as yet, too," she subjoined, speaking more glibly than usual. "By the time the sun reaches the tops of the trees, we begin to feel the dew-fall. Hester, we must go in!"

March took the handle of the wheeled chair from her. "That is too heavy for you on the thick grass. May, will you slide by the stuff until I come back?"

On every other afternoon, Homer had come down at five o'clock to roll the carriage up the ascent. Hester lay among the pillows, her eyes again shut, and the reflection of the happy secret upon her face. Hetty walked mutely beside her. March liked the fine reserve that kept her silent and forbade her to risk another encounter of glances. She was all-womanly; refined in every instinct. Crushing the young grasses with foot and wheel, and bowing under the stooping branches, they made their way to the gate in the parsonage-fence. Homer shambled hurriedly down the walk to meet them.

"Now—" he stammered, laying hold of the propeller of the chair—"I'd a bin here sooner, but I hed to go down town on an arrant—"

"That's all right!" said March, good-naturedly. "I was happy to bring Miss Wayt up the hill. Good-bye, Queen Mab! May I have the honor of taking you to my home-studio to see the picture when it is varnished and framed?"

She replied by a gentle inclination of the head, and the same joyous ghost of a smile. She was like one lost in a dream, so deep and delicious that he will not move or speak for fear of awakening.

March raised his hat and stood aside to let the carriage pass. As Hetty would have followed, his offered hand barred the way.

"One moment, please!" he said, in grave simplicity. "I have to thank you for some very happy hours. May I, also, thank you for the hope of many more? I should be sorry if our acquaintanceship were to fall to the level of social conventionality. We have always been intimate with our pastor's family, and I can, unless forbidden, to remain true to time-honored precedent."

If he had alarmed her just now, he could prove that he was no love-smitten boy, but a purposeful man who understood himself and was obedient to law and order. Hetty gathered herself together to emulate his tranquility.

"I especially want to thank *you*, out of her hearing, for the great kindness you and your sister have showed to my dear little invalid. She will never forget it, nor shall I. It has been the happiest week of her life. I think, but for your offer to lend her books, and Miss Gilchrist's promise to keep on with her painting lessons, that the end of our sittings would be a serious affliction to her. Please say this from me to Miss Gilchrist, also; good evening!"

He ran lightly back to May and "the stuff." He had not obtained permission to call, but neither was it refused. He liked dignity in a woman. As he phrased it, "it furred the peach and dusted the plum." He was entirely willing to do all the wooing.

May innocently applied the last touch to his unruffled spirit in their family confabulation in the library that evening.

"That Hetty Alling is one of the most delightful girls I ever met!" she asservated, emphatically.

"In what respect?" inquired her judicial parent.

"She has individuality—and of the best sort. She is intelligent, frank, spirited, and with these sterling qualities, as gentle as a saint with poor little Hester who must be a great care to one so young as Hetty. I mean to do all I can to brighten the monotonous existence the two girls must lead. From all I can gather without asking impertinent questions, they are thrown almost entirely upon one another for entertainment and happiness. It is an oddly-assorted household, taken as a whole."

"Talking of originality"—observed March, after a meditative puff or two—"you have it in the niece. It is fearfully sad that such a mind should be crowded into the body of a dwarf. She dotes upon books. If you will look up a dozen or so that you think she—or Miss Alling—would enjoy, I will take them over to-morrow."

His mother's attitude changed slightly, although her face was unaltered. She seemed to hold her breath to listen, her whole inner being to quicken into intensity of interest. March, stretched luxuriously upon the rug, in his usual post-prandial attitude, felt her sigh.

"Do I tire you, mother, dear?" he asked.

"Never, my boy!"

Nor ever would, although, within the hour, and with a throe that tested her reserves of fortitude, she had surrendered the first place in his heart. The blow was unexpected. The orchard paintings and her children's interest in them had seemed entirely professional to her. March had sketched dozens of girls, and fallen in love with none of them. With all his warmth of heart, and ready sensibilities, he was not susceptible to feminine charms. As a boy, he became enamored of art too early to have other flames. Perhaps, with fatuity common to mothers, she reasoned thus, with such a home as his, he was not likely to be tempted by visions of domestic bliss under a vine and fig-tree yet to be planted. It is a grievous problem to the maternal intellect why men who have the best mothers and sisters living and eager to spoil them with much serving, should be the earliest to marry out of certainty into hazardous uncertainty.

When the judge had gone to a political meeting, and May to entertain visitors in the drawing-room, Mrs. Gilchrist divined the purport of the impending communication. Her fair hand grew clammy in toying with the short chestnut curls; in the silence through which she could hear the tinkle of the fountain on the lawn, she wet her dry lips that they might not be unready with loving rejoinder to what her idol was preparing to say. She knew March too well to expect conventional preamble. He was always direct and genuine. She did not start when he spoke at length.

"Mamma, darling."

"Yes, my son."

"It has come to me at last, and in earnest."

"I surmised as much." It was plain to see where he got his dislike of circuitous methods. "Is it Mrs. Wayt's sister?"

"It is Hetty Alling. She is a true, noble woman. I shall try to win her love. Should I succeed, you will love her for my sake, will you not?"

"You know that I will. But this is sudden. You have known her less than a fortnight. And, dear, it is out of the fullness of my love that I speak—I am afraid that the family is a peculiar one. Be prudent, my son. You are young, and life is long. I can not bear that you should make a mistake here. Should this young girl be all that you think—even all that I hope to find in her—it is best not to force her decision. Give her time to study you. Take time, and make opportunities to study *her*. I ask it because you bear the names of two honorable men—your father and mine—and because it would break your mother's heart to see her only boy unhappy."

He drew her hand to his lips—the high-bred hand that would always be beautiful—and held it there for a moment. She had his pledge.

Hetty had followed Hester into the house. It was half-past five, and there were strawberries to be capped for the half-past six dinner. A parishioner had left a generous supply of Southern berries at the door while the girls were out, and taken Mrs. Wayt and her little daughters to drive. Aunt and niece sat down at a table drawn before the dining-room window and fell to work. Hester's high chair brought her tiny, dexterous fingers to a level with Hetty's. The task went forward with silent rapidity, and neither noted the direction of her companion's eyes. Hetty seemed to her dazed self to bear about with her the charmed atmosphere of the nook under the king apple tree.

The mingled hum of bees and sighing wind and bird-note sounded in her ears like the confused song of a sea-shell. Now and then, a ray from hazel eyes flashed athwart her sight. Brain and heart were in a tumult that terrified her into questioning her identity. The "winged boat" of fancy was a novel craft to our woman of affairs. As novel was the self-absorption that made her unobservant of Hetty's brilliant eyes and musing smile. As the dainty fingers, just reddened on the tips by the fruit, picked off and cast aside the green "caps," Hester's regards were fixed upon the Anak of the orchard, and Hetty's strayed continually to the same point. Both looked over and beyond a figure creeping on all-fours down the central alley of the broad, shallow garden, occasionally crouching low, as if to crop the grass of the borders.

Perry, studying his Latin grammar in his mother's chamber above, awoke the taciturn dreamers by a shout:

"Hello, Tony! what *are* you doing there?"

He turned his head, not his body, to reply:

"Now—jes' lookin' fur somethin' I dropped."

"You'll drop yourself some day if you don't watch out," Hester's unmusical cackle broke forth.

"Does he look more like a praying mantis—or Nebuchadnezzar?" she said to her co-worker. "He reminds me of a funny thing I heard a man say when I was a child of a picture in my catechism of Nebuchadnezzar feeding in the pasture with a herd of cows. He said it was 'a fine study of comparative anatomy.' The advantage would be on the side of the cows if Tony were to take the field."

Hetty could not but laugh with her in looking at the grotesque object.

"A short sight is a real affliction—poor fellow! It is to be hoped that he has 'dropped' nothing valuable. I will take the bowl and 'caps' into the kitchen when I have laid you down upon the lounge. Your poor back must ache by this time."

She lingered a few minutes in the kitchen to make sure that every thing was in train for dinner. Her practical knowledge of all departments of housewifery had already gained for her Mary Ann's profound respect. The cook recommended by Mrs. Gilchrist was a tidy body, a capital worker and, as she vaunted herself, "one as took an *intrest* in any family she lived in."

"I ast that pore innocent feller if there was any parsley in the gairdin," she chuckled to Hetty. "An' he said he'd fetch me a bunch to gairnish me dishes. But I've niver laid eyes onto him since. I mistrust he don't know one yarb from another. Is he 'all there,' d'ye think, mem?"

"He is not quick, but he is not an idiot, by any means," returned his patroness. "He is a faithful, honest fellow, always thankful for a kind word, very industrious and perfectly truthful. We think a great deal of Homer. I saw him in the garden just now, looking for the parsley. I will find him and send him in with it. Don't sugar the berries; we do that on the table. Keep them in a cool place until they are wanted for dessert."

She strolled down the garden walk, singing low to herself, the catching tune to which she had set the words the Gilchrists had overheard the Sunday night of their first call:

"O! I've and Love! O! happy throng!
Of thoughts whose only speech is song.
O! heart of man! canst thou not be
Blithe as the air is, and as free?"

Homer had vanished from the main alley that led directly to the orchard, yet she walked on down the whole

"I FORBID YOU TO THINK!"

length of it. Blazing tulips had supplanted faded hyacinths; the faint green globes of snow-ball bushes were bleaching hourly in May sunshine and breeze; the lilac hedge, lining the post-and-board fence at the bottom of the parsonage lot was set thick with purple and mauve and white spikes.

"Such a dear, old-fashioned garden!" Hetty said, half aloud. "It reminds me of the one we had at home!" Leaning upon the orchard gate she abandoned herself to reverie. The robin's whistle in the apple tree was low and tender; fleecy clouds, drifting toward the west, began to blush on the sunward side, the blending odors of a thousand flowers hung in the air. The word "home" took thought back—thoughts of the only one she had ever had, and the mother whose death lost it to her. Since then, she had stood alone, and helped weaker people to stand. A great longing for rest in a love she could claim as all hers drove tears to her eyes. The longing was not new, but the hope that softened it was. Hitherto, it had been linked with her mother's image, only. She wanted her now, as much, and more than ever before, but that she might sympathize with what she began to comprehend tremblingly. Her mother would enter into her trembling and her joy. Especially if she had seen what Hetty never could describe—a look the memory of which renewed the shy, delicious shame expressed in the blush March had pitied, while rejoicing in the sight of it.

Such a boundless, beautiful world opened to her while she stood there, looking down the blossoming vistas of the orchard—solitary, yet comforted! She would give rein to imagination for that little while. It could harm no one, even if it were all a chimera that would not outlast blossom-time. And must it be *that?* What had glorified other desolate women's lives might bless hers. Spring comes to every year, however long and cruel may have been the winter. Recalling March's prophecy of future association, she dared dwell upon visions of his visits, of the pleasant familiar talks that would make them better acquainted; of the books they would read and discuss; of the pictures he would paint, with her looking on.

"I am not beautiful or accomplished," she said, humbly. "But I would make myself more worthy of him. I am young and apt. I would make no mistakes that could mortify him. He should never be ashamed of me—and, oh!" she stretched her arms involuntarily, as if to draw the unseen nearer to her heart—"how faithfully I would serve him, forever and forever."

The flight of fancy had indeed been fast and far!

The tinkle of the dinner-bell in Mary Ann's vigorous hand, ended the fond foolishness abruptly. It was the careful housewife who asked herself, with a guilty start: "What has become of Homer and the parsley?"

Her first step in returning was upon something hard. She picked it up.

* * * * * * *

Homer met his young mistress at the back doors. His weak, furtive eyes were uneasy before she accosted him. At her incisive tone the red rims closed entirely over them, his hands, grimy with groping in gravel and turf, fumbled with one another and his loose jaw dangled.

"Homer, you said this afternoon that you had been out to do an errand. Do not leave the place again without letting me know where you are going, and for what."

"Now," he began, wretchedly, "you wasn't at home, 'm, I thought—"

"I forbid you to think! I will do the thinking for this family. You knew where to find me. If you had not, you ought to have waited until I got back. I mean what I say!"

He shifted miserably from one foot to the other, and, as she passed him, cleared his dry throat.

"Now, 'spose Mrs. Wayt was to send me out in a hurry?"

"Tell her that you have my orders."

"Now—"

She looked over her shoulder at him, impatient and contemptuous. He had never seen her so angry with him before. He plucked at the battered brim of an old military cap clutched in one hand. He had found it in the garret, and believed that it became him rarely.

"I was 'bout to say as I hed los' what I hed—"

"I found it. Not another word! There is no excuse for you!"

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Wayt availed himself of an early opportunity to make known his intention to take no vacation that year. He "doubted the expediency of midsummer absences on the part of suburban pastors." While many residents of Fairhill went abroad and to fashionable resorts in America in July and August, a respectable minority was content to remain at home, and some of the vacated cottages and villas were taken by city people, to whom the breezy heights and shaded lawns were a blessed relief from miles of scorching stone and brick. He "foresaw both foreign and domestic missionary work in his own parish," he said to his session in explaining his plans for the summer campaign.

The resolution was politic and strengthened his hold upon his new charge. Not to be outdone in generosity the people redoubled their affectionate attentions to their spiritual leader. Fruits, flowers and all manner of table dainties poured into the parsonage; carriages came daily to offer airings to Mrs. Wayt and the children, and on the Fourth of July a pretty phaeton and gentle horse were sent as "a gift to the mistress of the manse," from a dozen prominent parishioners.

"Verily, my cup runneth over."

A real tear dropped upon Mr. Wayt's shirt front as he uttered it falteringly on the afternoon of the holiday. Yet he had been repeating the words at seasonable intervals, and more or less moistily, since the hour of the presentation.

The Gilchrists were upon the eastern veranda, the embowering vines of which were beginning to rustle in the sea breeze. All had arisen at the pastor's appearance, and March set a chair for him.

"I have thought, sometimes, that I had some command of language," he continued, unctuously. "To-day I have no words save those laid to my use by the book of books. 'My cup runneth over.' It is not one of my foibles to expatiate upon the better 'days that are no more.' The trick is common and cheap. But to you, my best friends, I may venture to confide that my dear wife and I were brought up in what I have since been disposed to characterize as 'mistaken luxury.' Since the unselfish saint joined her blameless lot with mine she has never had a carriage of her own until to-day. I can receive favors done to myself with a manly show of gratitude. Appreciation of my wife makes a baby of me."

"By this time he should be in his second childhood, then, for everybody likes mamma," piped a familiar voice from within the French window of the library. Glancing around with a start that was not theatrical, he espied his eldest born established at her ease in a low chair. Her feet were on a stool; she wore a white gown, and May's white Chuddar shawl covered her from the waist downward; her hair was a mesh of gold thread that draw to it all the light of the dying day. May sat on a cushion in the window and linked Hester in her comparative retirement with the veranda group.

"Ah, little one, are you there?" said the fond parent, playfully. "I missed you from the dinner table and might have guessed that you could be nowhere but here."

Profound silence ensued and lasted for a minute. Hester shrank into herself with a blush visible even in the shadowy interior.

March, and May had gone through orchard and gardens to fetch her an hour ago. Her father had eaten his evening meal at the same table with her. In the circumstances, there was nothing to say, a fact comprehended by all except the unconscious offender.

"I think Mrs. Wayt will find her horse gentle," said Judge Gilchrist, in formal civility, too palpable to his wife. With intelligent apprehension of the truth, too often overlooked, that confidence in the truth bearer must precede obedience to his message, she desired that her husband and son should like Mr. Wayt. To March she had confessed her fear that some of the family were "peculiar," and he might infer the inclusion of the nominal head in the category. Further than this she would not go. With pious haste she picked the fly out of the ointment, and, with holy duplicity, beguiled others into approval of the article that bore the trade-mark of "The Church."

Ah, the church! in every age and, despite lapses and shortcomings and stains, the custodian of the Ark of God—her debt to such devout and loyal souls as this woman's will never be estimated until the Master shall make acknowledgment of it in the great day of reckoning.

When the judge's turn of the subject and the "horsey" talk that followed granted his wife leisure to reconsider the matter, she discovered that there was no cause for discomfiture. Mr. Wayt was absent-minded, as were all students of deep things. Only her husband was quick of sight and wit, and neither March nor May had much to say, of late, of the new preacher who was doing such excellent work in the congregation. March went regularly to church, and sat beside his mother through prayer and hymn and sermon, and afterward refrained from adverse criticism. This may have been out of respect to the girl he hoped to make his wife. Yet she dared fancy that the graver tenderness of his behavior to herself and the unusual periods of thoughtfulness that occurred in their conversations had to do with the dawning of spiritual life in his soul. However much certain of Mr. Wayt's mannerisms might offend her taste, there was no question of his ability and eloquence. That these might be the divinely-appointed nets for the ingathering into the church of her best beloved was a burden that weighted every petition.

March had not spoken openly of his love for Hetty Alling since the evening on which he first avowed it to his mother, but, in her opinion, there was nothing significant in this reserve. The Gilchrists were delicate in their dealings with one another, never asking inconvenient questions, or pushing communication beyond the voluntary stage. If May divined the drift of her brother's affections, she did not intimate it by word or look. When the fruit of confidence was ripe it would be dropped into her lap. She *did* note what Mrs. Gilchrist had not opportunity of seeing—how seldom Hetty had leisure to receive March or his sister. She was getting ready the wardrobe of the twin boys who were to go to boarding school the 1st of October. Through Hester's talk May had learned incidentally that the Wayts employed neither dressmaker nor seamstress.

"Hetty is miraculously skillful with her needle," was Hester's way of putting it. "And so swift that it would drive her wild to see her work done by the young lady who goes out by the day. I work buttonholes and hem ruffles and such like, and mamma gives her all the time she can spare from baby, and other things. But our Hetty is the motor of the household machine. I don't believe there is another like her in the world. The mold in which she was cast was broken."

She had said this in a chat held with her favorite this evening while the others were engaged with other themes outside of the window. May encouraged her to go on By remarking:

"You love her as dearly as if she were really your sister, don't you?"

"As well! The love I have for mother, sisters and brothers is a drop in the ocean compared with what I feel for Hetty! See here, Miss May!" showing her perfectly formed hands. "These were as helpless as my feet. Hetty rubbed me, bathed me, flexed the muscles for an hour every morning and an hour every night. She tempted me to eat; obliged me to take exercise; carried me up and down stairs, and sat with me in her arms out of doors until she had saved fifty dollars out of her allowance to have my chair built. Hetty educated me—made me over! She is my brain, the blood of my heart—I don't believe I should have a soul but for Hetty!"

The warm water stood in May's eyes. But the weak voice, thrilling with excitement, reminded her of the danger of an excess of feeling upon the disjointed system. She spoke lightly.

"Oh! your father would have looked out for your soul!"

"Would he?"

The accent of intensest acrimony shocked the listener, corroborated as it was by the bitterness of scorn that wrung the small face.

In a second Hester caught herself up.

"They say that cobblers' wives go barefoot. Ministers have so little time to spare for the souls of their families that their children are paganized. If it wasn't for their wives and their wives' sisters the forlorn creatures would not know who made them."

It was a plausible evasion, but it did not efface from May's mind the disdainful outburst and the black look that went with it. Both seemed so unnatural, even revolting, to a girl whose father stood with her as the synonym for nobility of manhood, that she could not get away from the recollection for the rest of the evening. This was before Mrs. Wayt's arrival, and sharpened May's appreciation of the little by play between Hester and her parent.

His departure at nine o'clock was succeeded by Hester's at ten o'clock, and, as was their habit, March and his sister took her home by the path across the orchard. The night was sultry; the moon lay languid under swathes of gray mist. She looked warm, and the stars gear her faint and tired. Low down and upon the horizon were flashes of purple sheet lightning. The town had kept the Fourth patriotically and the odor of burning paper and gunpowder tainted the stirless air.

"The grass is perfectly dry," said May, stooping to lay her hand upon the mown sward. "That should be a sign of a shower."

"There is always rain on the night of the Fourth of July," returned March, abstractedly.

Hester said not a word. As she looked up at the sick moon her eyes showed large and dark; her face was corpse-like in the wan radiance. She was weary and she had been indiscreet. She could not sleep without confessing to Hetty her lapse of temper and tongue and Hetty had enough to bear already. She had not been so strong and bright as was her wont for a month past. It might be only excess of drudgery over sewing machine and household duties, but she looked fagged and sad at times. The phaeton and horse would benefit mamma and the children—when the vacant place beside the mistress of the manse was not occupied by her lord and master. He got the lion's share of every luxury. Poor Hester's conscience and heart were raw and the heat of the wounds inflamed her imagination. The evening at the judge's had not rested her. That was strange, or would have been, had not the long, black shadow of her father lain across the memory of it.

The back door of the parsonage stood wide open and the house was so still that as March stooped to lift Hester from her carriage at the foot of the steps, he caught the sound of what was scarcely louder than an intermittent sigh in the upper story, but continuous as a violent fit of weeping. The arm that lay over his shoulder twitched convulsively; Hester shuddered sharply, then laughed aloud.

"O! Mr. Gilchrist! I thought I was falling! It is too bad to put you to all this trouble. I hope Tony hasn't blown himself up. He ought to have come for me!"

"Didn't I promise your mother to bring you home safely?" said March, reasuringly. And, as they reached the hall: "May I carry you upstairs?"

The offer seemed to terrify her.

"O! no, no! Just lay me on the settee there! Somebody will be down directly. Don't trouble yourself to bring the chair in. Tony will attend to that. Thank you! Good night, Mr. Gilchrist! Good night, Miss May!"

While she hurried all this out, a stumble on the backs-tairs was the precursor of Homer's appearance in the dim recesses of the hall. He alighted at the bottom of the flight on all fours, picked himself up and shambled forward, one hand on his head, the other on his elbow, an imbecile grin spreading his jaws.

"Now, I a'most broke me nake on them stairs!"

March had deposited Hester upon the hall lounge and, although perceiving her anxiety to get rid of him, hesitated to commit her to the keeping of a man who was, apparently, but half awake.

"Let me carry you up!" he insisted to Hester. "He may fall again."

"O! Tony is all right!" in the same strained key as before. "He never lets any thing hurt himself drop."

A rustle and swift step sounded above stairs. Some one ran down. It was

HE PULLED IT TO PIECES, HIS FACE GRAVE, HIS FINGERS LINGERING.

Hetty. Her white wrapper was begirt with a ribbon loosely, knotted; her rust brown hair was breaking from constraint and tumbling upon her shoulders.

March's first pained thought was: "She knew I would be in, yet did not mean to see me again to-night!"

A second glance at the colorless face and wild eyes awakened unselfish concern.

"What is the matter? Who is hurt?" she queried, anxiously. Hester's reply was a shriek of laughter.

"Nothing! Nobody! Only Tony has broken his neck again, and Mr. Gilchrist did not know that it is an hourly occurrence in our family life, so he insisted upon taking me upstairs himself."

"Mr. Gilchrist is very kind!" Hetty's tone was deadly mechanical; in speaking she looked at nobody. "I sent Homer down when I heard you coming. I am sorry he was not in time."

May had joined the group.

"I hope," she said, in her cheery way, "that none of the rest of your household have come to grief to-day?"

Hetty turned to her with eyes that questioned silently—almost defiantly.

"I mean, of course, did the boys bring home the proper quantum of eyes and fingers?"

"Yes! oh, yes! thank you! they went to bed tired, but whole, I believe."

"That is fortunate, but remarkable for a Fourth of July report," said March. "Come, May! Good-night!"

He had seen, without comprehending, the intense relief that flooded the girl's visage at his sister's second sentence, also that she was feverishly anxious to have them go. And the sound above stairs, hushed by Hester's shrill tones—was it low, anguished weeping? The mourner was not Hetty, yet her dry eyes were full of misery. His big, soft heart ached with futile sympathy. By what undiscovered track could he fare near enough to her to make her conscious of this and of a love the greatness of which ought to help her bear her load of trouble?

"Hetty looks dreadfully!" broke out May at the garden gate. "She is worked and worried to death! I am amazed that Mrs. Wayt allows it. To reduce a girl like that to the level of a household drudge is barbarous. She has no time for society or recreation of any kind. It is toil, toil, toil, from morning until night. Mary Ann—the cook—mammin got for them—says she 'never saw such another young lady for sweetness and kindness to servants as Miss Hetty, but that she carries all the house on them straight little shoulders of hern.' Hester tells the same story in better English."

She repeated what she had heard that evening.

March stopped to listen under the king apple tree, where he had begun to love the subject of the eulogy. While May declaimed he reached up for a cluster of green apples and leaves and pulled it to pieces, his face grave, his fingers lingering.

"Heaven knows, May"—she was not prepared for the emotion with which it was uttered—"that I would risk my life to make hers happy. I hoped once, but you see for yourself how she avoids me. I could fancy sometimes that she is afraid of me!"

"Perhaps she is afraid of herself?"

He looked up eagerly.

"Is that a chance remark? You women understand one another. Have you seen any thing—"

"Nothing I could or would repeat, my dear boy. But there is a mystery somewhere, and I can't believe it the phenomenon of such a sensible girl's failure to appreciate my brother. May I say something, March, dear?"

"Whatever you like—after what has gone before."

"May be it ought not to have gone before—or after, either. For, brother, this is not just the sort of connection that you should form. To speak plainly, you might look higher. 'Strike—but hear!' Hetty is all that I have said, and more. But there is a Bohemian flavor about the household. We will whisper it—even at half-past ten o'clock in the orchard—and never hint it to 'the people,' or to mamma! They are nomads from first to last—why, I can not say. They have lived everywhere, and nowhere long. Mrs. Wayt is a refined gentlewoman, but her eyes are sad and anxious. You know how fond I am of Hester, poor child! Still a nameless something clings to them as a whole—not quite a taint, but a tang! Especially to Mr. Wayt. There! it is out! Let us hope the apple trees are discreet! I distrust him, March! He doesn't ring true. He is always on pose. He is a sanctimonious (which doesn't mean sanctified) self lover. Such men ought to remain celibate."

March tried to laugh, but not successfully.

"I dissent from—and agree to nothing you say. But—" He waited so long that May finished the sentence for him.

"But you love Hetty?"

"Yes! She suits me, May! As no other woman ever did. As no other woman ever will. I have tried to reason myself out of the persuasion, but get deeper in. She suits me—every fiber and every impulse of my nature. I seem to have known her forever and always to have missed her."

With all her pride in her family and ambition for her brother May had a romantic side to her character. Had she liked Hetty less she would yet have pledged her support to the lover. She told him this while they strolled homeward, and then around and around the graveled drive in front of the Gilchrist portico; and had, in return, the full story of his passion.

It was that, by now, the strong overflow of an unhackneyed heart.

"When I marry my wife will have all there is of me," he had said, long ago, to his sister.

He reminded her of it to-night.

"She is not a brilliant society woman. Not beautiful, perhaps. I am not a competent judge of that at this date. She has not the prestige of wealth or station. But she is my counterpart.'

He always returned to that.

When his sister had gone into the house he tarried on the lawn with his cigar. What freshness the fierce sun had left to the air was all to be found out of doors. As the gray swathes continued to smother the light out of the moon the heat became more oppressive. The gravel walks were hot to his feet; the bricks of the house radiated caloric. With a half laugh at the whim, he entered the now silent and darkened dwelling, sought and procured a carriage rug and, pulling the door shut after him, whistled for Thor, and retraced his steps to the orchard. He spread the rug upon the grass kept cool by the down leaning branches of the arbor and cast himself upon it. He meant to make a night of it.

[To be Continued.]

Enderby Pork Packers.

Messrs. Knight & Co., proprietors of the Enderby pork packing factory, have completed the erection of their building, and will commence work very shortly, giving employment to about twenty hands. They claim to be able to put up hams, bacon, lard, etc., in such a manner as to challenge Chicago competition.

Mr. William Bryce has ripe raspberries now to be seen and tasted in his garden.

Sam Davis will appear for trial under the Summary Convictions Act, in the Speedy Trials Court at noon to-day.

Mr. C. B. Sword has issued his address to the free and independent electors of Westminster district. He announces himself as an independent candidate.

Yesterday Collector Milne was busily engaged taking further evidence in connection with the loss of the sealing schooner Mary Ellen.