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FAITH & FRIENDS.

BY

CARRIE J. HARRIS,
WOLFVILLE, N. S.,

Author of "Mr. Perkins, of Nova Scotia," "A Romantic Romance,"
"Cyril Whyman's Mistake," etc.

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May, 1946.

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WOLFVILLE, N. S.

WINDSOR, N. S.:

J. J. ANSLOW, BOOK, NEWSPAPER AND GENERAL JOB PRINTER.
1895.

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ESTATE OF ARMSTRONG
MAY 1946

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FAITH AND FRIENDS.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT IS A FRIEND?

"WHERE lives the man who could be pessimist enough to say, that life was not worth the living in such a paradise as this?" soliloquized Hal Delancy, as he paused at the crest of a low hill, and, leaning upon his wheel, gazed admiringly at the sparkling waters of Bedford Basin. A gentle breeze fanned his brow where the drops of moisture had gathered, caused by his rapid ride from the city. The soft strains of music from a naval band came floating over the water, which was dotted with the white sails of the numerous pleasure boats that were flitting over the crested waves. One could almost fancy Old Sol reluctant to quit the peaceful scene, so long did he appear to linger on the verge of the horizon; but at length he hides his head, and our

wheelman, with a long-drawn breath of perfect content, again springs lightly upon his revolving steed, and spins rapidly down the slope, the whir of his wheel keeping time to the glad music in his heart.

To-day his salary has been increased to such an extent that he feels it possible to begin the pretty cottage which has long been the dream of his life, the goal towards which he has steadily kept his face while forced to endure the, to him, uncongenial atmosphere of a boarding-house. He is now on his way to the suburban cottage which contains his adored divinity for the purpose of asking her to share his improved fortunes. The bright star of hope is beaming o'er his pathway. The devotion of almost half of his lifetime will, surely, be crowned by the gift of his darling Adelaide's love. He will soon know his fate, and as he dashes swiftly along, the glow left by the setting sun in yonder sky is not more brilliant than the glad light in his face as the home of his loved one appears in the distance.

Almost breathless from excitement and exertion, he is soon rolling over the gravelled walk between two well kept flower beds. The brightness fades from the western sky as he reaches the end of his journey. The shadows of night are falling fast, but there is still light enough left for him to perceive the form of his dreaded rival seated upon the

piazza by the side of his chosen fair one. The happy look is banished from his face and a jealous pang rends his heart as he recognizes his fellow-clerk, Alf Hathaway. The cordial greeting of Adelaide somewhat relieves his apprehensions, but the grave face which is bent over her extended hand is very unlike the usually genial face of Hal. He is bitterly disappointed. He so wanted the dear girl all to himself to-night. Exultantly he had watched Alf as he mounted his wheel and turned cityward only one short hour before—and now to find him here! He feels it almost more than he can bear.

"You are just in time to take part in our discussion," he hears Addie saying, as she glances somewhat anxiously, he fancies, at his disturbed countenance. "Mr. Hathaway declares that a true and lasting friendship between fellow-mortals is an impossibility. Do you coincide with his belief?"

"Mr. Hathaway's faith in humanity is dead." He jerked out the last of the sentence with a violent effort as he realized he had never been so near calling a fellow-creature a fool before.

"Thanks, awfully," replied the other, lazily. "Do you know I almost fancied from your manner you were going to use some stronger expression. Will you kindly favor the company with your views on friendship?"

"Our native poet, Howe, tells us a friend is

'A being, who, through all the changes time may bring,
Will still around us fondly cling.'

"A very pretty piece of composition, and no doubt the author believed every word of it when it was written. His own brow was probably decked with a good-sized wreath of fame about that time, and scores of friends were, of course, crowding around him, all more or less fawningly obsequious, and he thought the world a very jolly sort of a place to live in. So, with a heart bubbling over with gratitude towards those so-called friends, he has endeavored to bequeath to posterity his ideas of friendship. But take the last part of that verse. Could anything be more preposterous?

'And e'en through guilt and sin and shame,
Will shield, excuse, and love us still.'

Ah, there's the test of friendship! Through guilt and sin and shame! Have you ever known a case in real life where friendship survived disgrace? Can you give us an example from actual experience. Fairy tales may be all very fine to amuse children for a time, but for the average man or woman they are rather frivolous reading. What we require in this matter-of-fact age is proof, undisputed proof. Take, for example, the friendship between our two selves. We are what the world

would call good friends. We have worked side by side in the same office for the past two years. We have boarded in the same house, and frequently attended places of amusement in each other's company; but, were we to be parted to-morrow for an indefinite time, would it cause either of us one real pang? A clasp of the hands, a few spoken words, and each would go his separate way. A few letters would in all probability pass between us; frequently, at first, then at longer intervals, till at last one is sent which the other neglects to answer, and our friendship has become a thing of the past. Others have taken the places in those hearts which we once occupied, and our lives go on. Such is friendship the world over. Deny it if you can."

"Nevertheless, I shall most emphatically deny that such is true friendship. We have, as you assert, been good comrades since we have known each other; but friends, as I understand the meaning of the term, we never have been. There is no word in the English language more truly abused than the word friendship. For instance, a couple of giggling girls meet at some seaside resort, and after a few days' acquaintance confidences are exchanged. At the end of a month or so they part, each declaring herself the life-long friend of the other. After a time the two meet again, and possibly the one fails

to recognize the maiden muffled in furs whom she has only met in her summer gowns. The slighted one feels much hurt, and goes home, to use her own phraseology, heart-broken, emphatically declaring she will never, never trust mortal man or woman again. A vow she probably keeps till she has an opportunity of bestowing her heart upon some other charming stranger, when the same drama is repeated. This goes on from time to time, till at last all faith in humanity is gone, and the disappointed one endeavors to convince the world that friendship is a delusion. Such people never think of searching their own hearts to find the cause of their failure regarding their friends. They do not reflect that in order to inspire true friendship, they must themselves be true. I can give you an example of true friendship. To-day I received a letter from an old companion of my childhood,—one to whom I owe the few happy hours experienced during my lonely boyhood days,—one who stood by me when all others failed. Think you I could easily forget such a friend as he has proved himself in the past? We have not met for years, and the letter which told me he was shortly to visit his native land gave me more pleasure than when the manager told me my salary was to be increased. It seems as if I can scarcely wait for the time to pass, so anxious am I

to see him and clasp his dear hand once more. Of course I am prepared to find him changed, but I feel sure the same honest heart will be beating in his bosom, which he carried away from Nova Scotia years ago."

"And if you should be disappointed in your expectations, what then? Supposing, upon his arrival, this precious friend of yours should aspire to the hand of the woman with whom you might happen to be in love? Would you cheerfully surrender your love to the cause of friendship?"

"If my friend acted in an honorable manner, and the woman I loved preferred him to myself, why should I allow the fact to make any difference in our friendship. No; friendship such as ours will last till death. I cannot conceive of anything coming between us to part us from each other," was his answer, as his eyes involuntarily sought those of Addie, which were fixed upon his face with a look that spoke volumes—a look which removed the heavy weight from his heart. "If," he thought, "Alf has ever possessed the slightest chance here, he has destroyed it by his reckless conversation to-night, for, whether he is sincere in what he says or not, no girl of Addie's temperament will ever think of trusting her future to a man who could for a moment entertain such sentiments."

Just then, Mrs. Elliott appearing upon the scene, the conversation was changed, and the rest of the evening passed pleasantly. Hal, having begged the pleasure of becoming the escort of the ladies to the Academy of Music the following evening, Alf, with his usual assurance, proposed to become one of the party, a proposition which was accepted with apparent pleasure by Mrs. Elliott, much to Hal's disgust, and the two young men took their departure.

After rolling along side by side for some time without exchanging a word, Alf at last broke the silence by bursting into a loud laugh, to which his companion responded by a look of extreme surprise, which only served to increase his merriment.

"I rather think I stole a march on you to-night, old fellow," he at last condescended to remark. "I knew by your looks at tea time that you were bound out here to-night, and also that you meant to sneak off without me if you could manage it. It was as good as a play to see the relieved look upon your face when I announced my intention of spending the evening down town, and also to witness the disappointment you vainly strove to conceal when you rode up to the house and found the fair Adelaide and myself enjoying each other's society," and the look of indignation upon the face of Hal as he listened to the flippant way in which he spoke of

Adelaide sent the offender off into another peal of laughter, which so enraged the young man that he resolved to be rid of his unwelcome companion. Bending over his wheel, he spurted forward, but the other, seeing his intention, immediately followed his example, and the two fairly flew over the ground for some time.

"You see, I am as hard to shake off as the old man of the sea," laughed Alf, when they dismounted at the door of their boarding-house. "I intend to keep an eye on you, my fine fellow, for the future, as we both happen to be candidates for the hand and fortune of the same fair lady. What will you bet I don't come out one ahead of you?"

"I never bet," answered Hal, stiffly, as he coolly closed the door of his private apartment almost in his companion's face.

"Like to shake me off, would you? But you have got it bad!" muttered the other, cynically, as he sauntered slowly down the corridors to his own room. "I have my work cut out, for there is not the least doubt that the darling Adelaide would prefer your noble self for a life-long companion, but I intend to come out ahead for all that, so look out for breakers, Mr. Delaney, your faithful heart is drifting straight upon them. Addie has a fine little dot of her own which will be well worth the

trouble of winning, apart from her own precious self. You have managed, Hal Delancy, to worm yourself into the confidence of our manager, and get promoted over the heads of us all, but I, for one, will be even with you yet. The loss of Addie you will consider the greatest calamity you could be called upon to endure. More fool you, as if the love of any woman was worth a second thought."



CHAPTER II.

A NEW RIVAL.

THE night following his promotion which his fellow-clerk so bitterly resented, Hal vainly sought a visit from Morphens. The fellow's acknowledged designs on Addie filled him with considerable alarm. He had feared him as a rival in a passive sort of a way for some time, but as neither had been in a position to marry, Alf's attentions had not been a source of very great trouble to our hero. The allusion to her fortune, however, served to open his eyes. Had the dear girl really a fortune in her own right of which Alf was cognizant, and was the scoundrel seeking to woo her for the wealth she would bring him? Hal remembered there were several members of her family who were considered very wealthy, and it was not improbable she might possess a considerable fortune in her own right, notwithstanding the fact that she and her mother lived in an extremely simple style. "Heaven preserve her from such a

fate," was his unspoken prayer as he pictured the future before her if she should become the wife of the brilliant, dashing Alf. He knew the fellow to be utterly selfish and unprincipled, and he resolved to preserve the woman he so truly loved from such an unhappy marriage if it lay in his power.

For several weeks he strove to obtain a private interview and learn his own fate, but in vain. Alf would checkmate him at every turn. Did he occasionally succeed in dodging him and start for the cottage, the other was sure to pass him on the way, and be the first to greet him with a mocking smile on his arrival. He looked forward with no small amount of impatience to the coming of his friend, Vernon Clifford. He felt in him he would have a powerful ally, who would aid him in defeating his troublesome rival. At length the wished-for day arrived, bringing with it the friend of his early youth, and although outwardly he found him much changed, as he anticipated, he still hoped to find him unchanged at heart. But the days went by, and he shrank more and more from pouring his troubles into the ear of this cynical man, who seemed inclined to sneer at all sentiment. To make matters worse, Vernon claimed all his spare time for his entertainment, and Hal, faithfully remembering the past, strove to give ungrudgingly

the precious hours he fain would have dedicated to Addie ; and his exacting friend never guessed how hard it was sometimes for the unselfish fellow to see his rival mount his wheel and speed away to the residence of his lady love, leaving him to be dragged to uncongenial resorts for the pleasure of the newcomer. He feared some false motive would be charged upon his apparent desertion by the Elliotts, for he knew Alf to be capable of any treachery, and that he would give any explanation which suited him did Mrs. Elliott or Addie take the trouble to inquire after him. Had Vernon been a wheelman, it would have been an easy matter to have inveigled him to the vicinity of their home, and then to drop in upon them in a friendly way ; but, try as he would, he could not even induce his friend to mount a wheel. Indeed, he appeared to be strongly prejudiced against them. He could claim no tie stronger than friendship, and that he felt would not be a sufficient excuse for dragging Vernon out there in a carriage, so for some time the poor fellow suffered his martyrdom in silence. But at last he could bear it no longer. He would see Addie and learn his fate at all hazards. Finding Alf was really going in another direction one evening, he resolved to escape from his friend's surveillance and pay a visit to Brierwood Cottage.

"Where in the world is Brierwood Cottage, inquired Vernon, when he announced his intention; "and who are those people for whose sakes a more than ordinary entertainment at the opera house is to be sacrificed?"

"Brierwood Cottage overlooks Bedford Basin, and those people are a Mrs. Elliott and her daughter, both particular friends of mine, to whom I owe many a pleasant evening," answered Hal, with some heat. He had made up his mind to visit Addie to-night, and he intended to show Vernon he was not to be deterred from his purpose.

"All right," replied his companion, "I cannot say that I am particularly anxious to be roasted in a densely packed building with the thermometer as high as it registers to-night. Now, suppose you doff that outlandish bicycle uniform and array yourself in more presentable garments, while I run down and order a carriage. I think a drive along the Bedford shores would be delightful this evening, so I will accompany you on your excursion."

Poor Hal dropped his eyes to conceal his disappointment. To be baulked again, and this time by his friend!

But, in tones which he endeavored to make cordial, he accepted Vernon's proposal, and turned away to don his evening clothes while the other

went for a carriage, little dreaming how he had defeated his comrade's plans.

The two were soon swiftly driving along the Bedford road, Hal's spirits gradually rising the nearer he approached the home of Adelaide. The farther they left the dusty city behind them, the more silent became his companion, till at last the conversation ceased altogether. Vernon, who held the reins, divided his attention between his lively pony and the beautiful view over the Basin, while Hal, leaning back in the carriage, allowed his thoughts to precede them to Brierwood Cottage and the presence of the peerless Adelaide. As he joyfully anticipated the pleasure in store for him at the approaching meeting, it suddenly occurred to him what a dolt he had been. During all those weeks of uncertainty, when he had been compelled to endure the tortures of suspense, why had he not resorted to paper in order to communicate his desires to the object of his adoration? He would write to her without delay, he thought, as they drew near the cottage, which he pointed out to Vernon, and their frisky steed was soon prancing before the door, while he, with a beaming countenance, was introducing his friend to Mrs. Elliott and her daughter.

"Really, Mr. Delaney, you are quite a stranger,"

cried Mrs. Elliott, when the introductions were over. "I have been inquiring of Mr. Hathaway several times what had become of you, but was invariably informed that you now had so many superior attractions nearer the city, that you had no time to devote to your country acquaintances."

"It seems to me that was hardly kind in Mr. Hathaway," answered Hal, as he glanced at Adelaide to learn if she shared her mother's opinion regarding his absence. But the younger lady's eyes were resolutely turned towards the window, and she appeared to be taking no interest in the conversation.

"Alf knew," he continued, reproachfully, "that Vernon claimed all my spare time, and I could scarcely desert my old friend during the first days of his arrival, leaving him alone among comparative strangers."

"No, Mrs. Elliott," broke in Clifford, "the blame, if there be any, must fall on my shoulders. I can assure you Hal tried hard enough on more than one occasion to ride off on his confounded (ah, excuse me,) wheel, but I always managed to catch him before he made his escape. To-night he almost accomplished his purpose, but I captured him as usual. When he found he was cornered, he became furious, and flatly refused to be governed by my whims any

longer. He was going to visit Brierwood Cottage, and that's all there was about it, so I had to compromise matters by hunting up a horse and buggy, and here we are. Now that I know you, I feel compelled to offer my humble apologies for my selfishness in preventing your young friend from visiting you before, and trust you will not punish me for my offence by depriving me of the pleasure of accompanying him when he again visits this charming locality."

His hostess hastened to assure him that any friend of Mr. Delancy's was always welcome at Brierwood Cottage, to which he replied with more exaggerated compliments, while Hal listened with secret disgust, as he discovered this new phase in his old friend's character. He felt such superfluous language to be little short of an insult to a woman like Mrs. Elliott, while the scarcely perceptible curl of Addie's lip increased his anger. But, notwithstanding his gushing manner, Hal was relieved, as the evening passed, to see that Mrs. Elliott had taken a fancy to the young man, and when they were leaving she cordially invited him to accompany his friend when he again visited them.

"You are a sly dog, that you are," laughed Vernon, as they drove homeward, "but I must thank you for a very pleasant evening. The old lady

seems well informed, and the daughter gave me the impression of being above the average. Now, if I ever anticipated such a thing as turning benedict, she is just the sort of a girl I would select for my companion. Has she any tin? But of course not, they would not be living in that secluded way if they possessed means. It is always the way with those nice girls. They are invariably as poor as the proverbial church mouse."

"This case, I rather fancy, is an exception," answered Hal, with a smile. "Adelaide is reported to possess quite a fortune in her own right, although I cannot vouch for the truth of the statement. But you surely do not belong to such a despicable class of men as the ordinary fortune-hunter?"

"Not exactly a fortune-hunter, perhaps; but, nevertheless, a snug fortune is by no means to be despised, and I candidly acknowledge I should not care to marry a poor woman."

"But if you loved her—"

"Love! fiddle-sticks! Are you foolish enough to indulge in such sentimental twaddle? Love and honesty deserted this world about the same time. It is gold, always gold, which now leads in every undertaking."

Poor Hal felt he could bear almost any blow after listening to this avowal from his friend. He had

staked all his faith on the truth and honor of Vernon, only to hear him proclaim both marketable commodities, which gold could always purchase.

"Alf's philosophy must be right after all," he thought, bitterly; "true friendship in this bustling world of ours has really become a thing of the past. But no, I will not believe it," he declared emphatically to himself, as his thoughts went back to their early life, and a picture of the old, honest Vernon, rose before his mental vision. "Changed he may have become in some things, but my noble Vernon is still true at heart. I know not what bitter experience he has been called upon to endure, but I feel that truth and honor are not yet dead, but only sleeping, and who is better fitted than Addie to wake him from his lethargy? Say what he will, I know he is still honest at heart, and will make her happy if he is fortunate enough to win her love. If she learns to care for him, I feel I could surrender her, for he will make her a good husband."

But as the unselfish fellow thus decided her destiny, a lump rose in his throat, and his resolution almost failed him. He felt it would be no easy matter to give her up, even to Vernon. Ah, if he could only gather her into his arms and bear her far away where the eye of neither Vernon nor Alf would ever behold her more! But, could he make

her happy? Unlike his friends, he had neither good looks nor brilliancy to recommend him. How could such as he hope to win the heart of such a peerless treasure? He would strive to be only the good friend of both, and live out his life alone; but, as he reached this decision, something told him he could never be content with Adelaide's friendship, and that he could feel the same towards Vernon, if once he became her husband, he knew was an impossibility. Fight against his feelings as he would, he knew their friendship was doomed.



CHAPTER III.

HAL'S SURRENDER.

FOR the next few weeks Hal remained a passive spectator, watching the bitter rivalry which existed between Alf and Vernon. Which would eventually win? was the momentous question. For Addie's sake the faithful lover ardently hoped that Vernon would be the successful competitor. Night after night he remained by his chamber window and saw Alf upon his wheel, and Vernon, seated in a stylish buggy, take the road leading to the Elliott cottage.

At first his friend used to frequently offer him a seat beside him, but of late he seemed to have forgotten his very existence, except to occasionally nod when they met at the table. Hal, to ease his aching heart, devoted himself assiduously to his employment, where he won many a favorable comment from his crusty old manager, crumbs of comfort which were eagerly devoured by the young man, who felt gratified to know he was of some use in

the world. The increasing coldness of both Adelaide and her mother, when they met, prevented him from visiting Brierwood, so he was ignorant of how matters were progressing in that quarter, till, meeting Alf one evening in the corridor, he was surprised by that worthy stopping him and requesting his congratulations.

"On your engagement to Adelaide, of course," he at last forced himself to say, as he raised a face from which all color had fled, to meet the triumphant look of his companion.

"Well, not exactly," Alf answered slowly, enjoying his fellow-clerk's embarrassment, "but on my engagement to her mother."

"Her mother! Preposterous! You are joking!"

"On the contrary, I never was more serious in my life. I can assure you the fair widow has done me the honor to bestow upon me her heart—hand and fortune are soon to follow. I saw some time ago there was no chance for me with the younger lady, so I did the next best thing, and made love to the mother, with what success you see. As soon as your confounded friend appeared on the scene, I saw at once it was a case of spoons. By-the-way, how goes your friendship now? Still as warmly attached as ever to the noble Vernon? Or have you discovered there are some things more precious than friendship in this world?"

"Gold, for instance," sneered Hal.

"Yes, gold is the one thing needful to render us perfectly happy. *Mère Elliott* has a cool two thou. a year for her jointure, upon which we will be able to live very comfortably. And I think we will make a model pair, don't you?"

"Notwithstanding the fact that she is fifteen or twenty years your senior?"

"Beg pardon, only nine. I am older than I appear. I was thirty-nine last spring."

"Nine years on the wrong side of the house, you must acknowledge. I gave Mrs. Elliott credit for being a sensible woman."

"And, like a sensible woman, she prefers matrimony to lonely widowhood."

"She has her daughter for a companion."

"But it's on the cards she won't have her long. V. Clifford, Esq., means to capture the heiress very soon."

"In that case she might content herself with the grandchildren, which will probably appear later on the scene."

"She is not fool enough to give up a sure thing for an uncertainty."

"The sure thing being yourself, I presume. After all, there may be some advantage in a man selecting a companion who can take the place of his mother."

when occasion requires, and it becomes doubly advantageous when the lady happens to possess a large income."

"Just so. The fact is, Delancy, I have not your perseverance nor business abilities. I will never manage to be promoted, and office work in the position I am competent to fill is to me the worst of drudgery."

"And a mercenary marriage with a woman old enough to be your mother is a much better way of obtaining a livelihood."

"I might question your right to lecture me in this style, but I have no desire to quarrel. Indeed, my object in approaching you this evening, was for the purpose of asking you to be my right hand man when the happy event takes place."

"Why not press Vernon into service. Let the elder pair be married first, and then you will be in a position to give the young couple your blessing. If your blooming bride elect is in need of a friend, I might stand in the place of a father towards her."

"A capital idea. Why did it not occur to me before? I will speak to Clifford on his return. I can depend upon you, of course."

"Of course," retorted Hal, looking the disgust he felt, as he abruptly turned his back upon Hathaway and sought the privacy of his own apartment.

"What a philosopher!" muttered Alf. "He does not take his disappointment so much to heart as I expected he would, but perhaps this calmness is all in the cause of friendship. I should not wonder if Adelaide's jilting him has served to make a man out of a milk-sop."

If the prospective bridegroom could have seen Hal's face when he closed the door so abruptly upon him, he would have had occasion to change his opinions about the young fellow taking his disappointment so philosophically. However, if anything could have reconciled him to the loss of his darling, it was the thought of being forced to accept Alf Hathaway as a father-in-law.

"Mrs. Elliott must be crazy," was his thought, as he threw open the window, and leaning far out, he endeavored to cool his burning brow. The sound of voices below changed the current of his thoughts, and, without thinking what he was doing, he found himself listening to their conversation. Vernon had returned, and Alf had accosted him upon the stoop. Mechanically he listened to Alf's proposition that they should celebrate their nuptials on the same day, and Vernon cheerfully assented, subject, of course, to the approval of Adelaide.

"He has been accepted!" thought Hal, and the last spark of hope died suddenly out of his heart.

"Delaney has promised to give my bride away," continued Alf; "perhaps he can be induced to perform a like favor for Adelaide. Rather a hard position, though, for a man to bestow on another the hand of a woman whom he once had hopes of winning for his own."

"Hal in love with Mrs. Elliott!" exclaimed Vernon. "Now that you speak of it, I remember it occurred to me the evening he first took me out there, that there was something between him and the old lady, (I beg your pardon, I should have said Mrs. Elliott). He might have known a fellow like him had no chance against you. That accounts for his being in the dumps lately."

By a violent effort Hal prevented himself from expressing his indignation to his false friend.

"I in love with Mrs. Elliott," he muttered, as he retired from the window. "I do not wonder you laugh," he muttered, as he listened to Alf's ringing laugh. "I am not surprised that you should find considerable amusement in Clifford's mistake. But I shall have to acknowledge you are right after all, Mr. Hathaway. Truth and honor have now got to be mere empty words. Adelaide is evidently as bad as the rest. What a happy family they will make. But I wish I had not been such a fool as to promise my services at the wedding. I suppose I am in for

it now. I wonder if it would be possible for me to discover some way out of it! I have no relative living at a distance to whom I could be summoned by telegram just as the important event was about to take place. There is no chance for my being ordered out of town on business for the firm, for that part of the work always falls to the lot of Mortimore, lately."

Still turning the subject over in his mind, he fell asleep, and did not awaken till the ringing of the breakfast bell. As the familiar sound roused him from his slumbers, he felt he had been visited by some dreadful misfortune.

"But I cannot be quite heartbroken," he thought, when he remembered what had happened, "for I have enjoyed a good night's rest. Disappointed lovers are supposed to be also deserted by the drowsy god."

He found an answer to his silent petition of the night before when he reached his place of business the next morning.

"The manager left orders for you to go to his private room as soon as you came in," said a fellow-clerk, as he passed on the way to his desk.

Secretly wondering what was wanted, he hastened to obey the summons, thinking misfortunes never come singly. "What if I am to be dismissed?"

But his employer dispelled his fears by greeting him kindly and requesting him to be seated.

"How would you like to take charge of our branch in the West Indies?" questioned the old gentleman, as he bent a piercing look upon his trusted clerk.

"Very much," answered Hal, in a manner which surprised himself at his own coolness.

"Then you must make your preparations to-day. We have a message this morning that Howell, our former agent, is laid off by illness. The doctor has ordered him home, and his successor must be sent out at once. The *Taymouth Castle* sails to-morrow, and if you accept our offer you must sail in her."

Should he accept their offer? As if he could for an instant hesitate! Did it not open for him a way to escape from attending that hated wedding!

When the *Taymouth Castle* sailed out of the harbor the following morning, he was quite willing to be a passenger. He was thankful the time for making his preparations was so short. He would thus be able to escape from the ordeal of saying farewell to Adelaide. He could, before his departure, send her and her mother some substantial proof of his friendship, accompanied by a politely worded note wishing them every happiness in the new life they were about to enter, and then away into exile,

where he would endeavor to forget his heartache in the busy whirl of business. He knew what lay before him in the south, and that there would be no leisure for vain regrets.

During the day he managed to find time to pack and dispatch a couple of valuable paintings to Brierwood Cottage. He hesitated for some time over sending those treasured articles, purchased months before, and carefully hoarded for the purpose of one day decorating the cozy nest in which he had planned to enshrine Adelaide.

"Away with all sentiment!" he at last exclaimed, decidedly. "I want nothing in my new home to remind me of what a fool I have made of myself for the sake of a false woman's smile. I feel compelled to send them something, and those will do as well as anything else." And with a firm hand he placed the pictures in their case and directed them to the prospective brides. That accomplished, he spent the remainder of the evening in taking leave of his intimate acquaintances, and the following morning, soon after sunrise, he was seated on the deck of the steamer which was to bear him to the south.

"The romantic chapter of my life is now closed," he thought, as he gazed longingly at the fast receding shores of his native province.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WEDDING GIFTS.

"I RECEIVED a note from Hal Delancy this morning," said Mrs. Elliott to her daughter on the day of Hal's departure.

"Indeed!" returned Adelaide, calmly. "And what does Mr. Delancy have to say for himself?"

She was bitterly incensed at Hal's desertion, although not even to her mother would she have acknowledged her disappointment.

"Here is his letter, you can read it for yourself," and she held the epistle towards her.

"I must confess I am sadly disappointed in that young man. He has acted so differently from Alfred," and a complacent smile crept around the corners of her mouth.

Silently Adelaide took the letter and opened it. Any allusion to the worthy Alfred annoyed her exceedingly. When she mastered the contents she handed it back.

"So he has gone," was her only remark.

"Yes, gone without even taking the trouble to say good-bye; and I always thought his attentions to you meant something serious. He has not acted honorably. He begs our acceptance of a trifling gift as a memorial of his friendship. Alfred said nothing about his departure last evening. He must have kept it a secret from his fellow-clerks. I should have felt dreadfully if Alfred had served me so. There is no crime, in my estimation, so wicked as daring to trifle with a woman's heart."

"Be thankful you are spared such a pang," retorted her daughter, with a curl of her proud lip. "But there is some excuse for Hal Delaney. He had not the same motive for remaining faithful as your paragon of an Alfred. You possess an income of over two thousand a year, besides this cottage and a house in the city, while I am only the prospective heiress of my dear uncle John, a man likely to live, and I trust he will, for many, many years. To quote Mr. Hathaway's favorite expression, your fortune is an assured thing, while as for myself,—you know the old adage, 'There's many a slip—'"

"For shame, Adelaide, to speak so disrespectfully of such a highly honorable gentleman as my betrothed! You may say what you please, you cannot convince me he does not love me for myself alone,"

said Mrs. Elliott, angrily ; " fortune-hunter though he is, undoubtedly."

" There, mamma, I am sorry I have vexed you ; I promise I will not say another word against my future father-in-law. Where are those trifling gifts of which Mr. Delancy speaks in his letter. I am anxious to see what his tastes are when selecting gifts for ladies."

" There is a box on the back stoop which has just arrived, and if one is to judge by the size, his presents cannot be trifling ones. You had better call William and have it opened."

" How lovely !" exclaimed Adelaide, rapturously, as the pictures were exposed to view, the upper one with a card attached bearing the inscription, " For Miss Elliott, with best wishes for her future happiness, from her friend, Harold Delancy."

" Let William carry it into the house for you, my child," said her mother, as she watched her daughter's efforts to remove the heavy painting from the packing-case. But the girl imperiously waved him aside. She would allow no sacrilegious hand to touch her lover's parting gift. She carried it to her own room, where, with tear dimmed eyes, she gazed long and earnestly at the only souvenir she possessed of the man who had won her young heart's love, only to desert her. What had changed him so ? she

asked herself. He, whom she had ever thought so true and honest, could not be wholly base and fickle! Could Hathaway be in any way accountable for his changed demeanor towards her? She had always distrusted the fellow. She would watch him closely when next he came to visit them; in the hope of learning something from his actions, if he was guilty of any treachery towards them. If she could only prove his villainy to her dear mother, for instinct told her he was a villain at heart, she might prevent the fearful sacrifice her parent was bent upon making. To accomplish this, she felt, would in a measure repay her for the loss of her own dear lover. How dear she only knew when she had probably lost him forever.

She was aroused from her sad reverie by a summons to the drawing-roofn, where she found her visitor to be Hal's most cherished friend, Vernon Clifford. Now she would be able to learn something definite of Hal's departure, and she greeted his friend so cordially that it sent that gentleman's hopes soaring high. But he had not come there for the purpose of discussing his friend, and he soon managed to let his companion know that he knew but little more than herself regarding the young fellow's movements.

"He understood the manager of the company who

employed Hal had offered him a much more lucrative position in the south than he occupied here, and, upon receiving his promotion, he had sailed almost immediately for the scene of his labors. Perhaps Hathaway could give her more definite information, for at the breakfast table he had overheard him telling a companion about going down to the steamer with Delancy to see him off."

His complete indifference towards the friend who, only a few short weeks before, had in her presence expressed such unbounded faith in his fidelity, made her exceedingly indignant, and her manner towards him suddenly cooled. He, however, appeared to take no notice of the change, but proceeded to lay his heart and fortune at her feet,—a gift she instantly declined, in rather curt terms, and the two parted with a great show of friendliness which deceived neither.

There was now nothing to do except wait the advent of Hathaway before she could learn more of Delancy's departure in such a hurried manner. Fortunately her powers of endurance were not severely taxed, for, as far as outward appearances went, he was a most devoted lover, and the evening brought him to the cottage. He was entrusted with numberless excuses by Hal, bewailing his inability to take a personal farewell of his kind friends be-

fore his departure; but he had only received his appointment a short time before the sailing of the steamer, consequently his time was very limited,—in fact, he was obliged to spend the entire night in making his preparations for his journey. He would, of course, write to them all after reaching his destination, as it would probably be some time before he would be enabled to return to Nova Scotia. The evident sincerity of the young man impressed Adelaide very favorably, and did much to reconcile her to the thought of her mother's marriage. The despair which had been tugging at her heart strings all the afternoon was speedily put to flight. Her own dear Hal had not been guilty of neglect, after all. With a heart full of gratitude towards Alf for the consolation he had brought, she silently withdrew from the drawing-room, leaving the lovers to their own companionship.

A few weeks after, there was a quiet wedding at the cottage, and after indulging in a short tour, the bridal pair took up their abode in Mrs. Hathaway's city residence, where they made their preparations for spending a gay winter. Adelaide accompanied her mother and step-father to their new abode, and strove to extract what pleasure she could from her changed surroundings.

But she was not long in discovering that the step-

daughter of Alf Hathaway occupied a much inferior position to the one she had occupied as the sole heiress of Mrs. Elliott. Possessing only an average amount of good looks and accomplishments, she had nothing in particular to recommend her to the opposite sex, consequently her little train of admirers rapidly diminished. She heard nothing from Hal after his departure, the expected letter never having arrived. His friend Clifford, immediately after her rejection of his suit, departed for his birthplace, a small town in the western part of the province, therefore she had no opportunity of learning anything regarding her old lover. That he meant to desert her she now felt fully convinced; and, being a modern nineteenth century young lady, she had no intention of wearing her heart out in vain repinings. She now regretted her folly in so hastily dismissing Clifford. "But regrets will not bring him back," she thought, "so I can only retrieve my mistake by taking advantage of the first opportunity which comes my way."



CHAPTER V.

AN ACCIDENTAL MEETING.

ONE of the boats plying between New York and Fall River was rapidly making her way down the Sound one scorching August evening. Let us pause before a group surrounding a tall, bronzed and bearded man, who is entertaining them with an account of his travels in other lands. Can this voluble stranger really be our modest friend Hal, from whom we parted three years ago? If it is indeed he, what a change those past three years have wrought! So thinks the quiet little woman who leans over the railing with her back partially turned towards the group of which he forms the central figure, as she listens to the well-remembered voice that had once caused her heart to flutter like that of an imprisoned bird when a rude hand touches its dainty plumage. At last he tires of the attention he is receiving from those strangers, and, coolly turning his back upon them, he leans over the rail-

ing near the lonely woman upon whom his eyes rest for an instant as they rove restlessly up and down the side of the vessel.

"Miss Elliott that was!" he exclaims, as he smilingly advances towards her, with outstretched hand.

"This is an unexpected pleasure. Are you travelling alone, or does your husband accompany you?"

"I am still unmarried," she answered, quietly; so quietly that she marvelled at her own calm manner, when her heart was beating so wildly at this accidental meeting with her old lover.

"Indeed!" was his surprised exclamation, "I thought you married Clifford!"

It now occurred to him he had never heard of her marriage, but he had been thinking of her as the wife of Vernon all these years.

"You have been incorrectly informed. Mr. Clifford left Halifax for the country a few days after your own departure, and I have never met him since. I have heard, indirectly, that he married soon after settling somewhere in the vicinity of Annapolis, but I cannot vouch for the truth of the statement."

The slight tremor in the girl's voice tells him it is for his own sake Vernon has been rejected, for he feels instinctively her rejection of his old friend caused his sudden departure from Halifax, and his

heart gives a great leap. What a fool he has been! Instead of living a life of solitude for the past three years, he might have had this dear girl by his side, for dear to him she is still, although he has been unconscious of the fact till now. He has loved her too well to permit another to occupy the place he once dreamed she was to fill.

"Are Mr. and Mrs. Hathaway with you?" was his next question.

"No, I am alone. The fact is, I became jealous of Mr. Hathaway, after being forced to divide my mother's affections with him, and struck out for myself. I have been spending my vacation with my uncle John and his young wife at their Hudson villa, and am now returning to Boston and my duties as a hospital nurse. You see, my mother's and my uncle's marriages have considerably diminished my prospects of ever becoming an heiress, consequently I have to depend upon my own exertions for a livelihood."

A great feeling of compassion swept over him, as he detected the undercurrent of bitterness in her last remark.

"There appears to be a similarity in our positions. Both are alone in the world. Why should we not live the rest of our lives out in each other's companionship?" he murmured, as he drew nearer to

her, regardless of the crowd by which they were surrounded.

"Three years ago I meant to ask you to become my wife, but was deterred by the knowledge that you were one day to be a great heiress, and far beyond the aspirations of a humble clerk. Now that our positions are more equal, I can ask the question without being looked upon by the woman I love as a fortune-hunter."

"Really, this is so sudden! I must have time to decide," said Adelaide, tremulously.

"Till we reach Fall River, then," replies the impetuous lover, and the girl, seeing the love-light in his eyes, knows when she leaves the boat that her answer will be "yes."

The two remain together till the hour of parting comes. He leads her to the door of her state-room, and after tenderly bidding her good-night, they separate, each to dream of the one who has so unexpectedly crossed the other's path.

* * * * *

The moon has performed her monthly journey since we met our friends upon the Fall River boat, and she again presents her round and shining face to the world. She smiles upon a group seated upon the piazza of a pretty cottage on the outskirts of the old historic town of Annapolis. Vernon Clifford,

accompanied by his plump little wife, has just called at the summer residence of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Hathaway, to welcome his old friend Hal and his bride, who have landed from the midday train. Hal feels, as his hand is grasped by his friend, that it is the old Vernon who greets him, not the cynic he met in Halifax three years ago.

As the two friends wander through the grounds later in the evening, Vernon tells him how his faith in mankind had been dulled by the treachery of some trusted friends before he left the West.

"But my dear girl brought me back to life again, and made a man of me once more. Ah, Hal! I tell you, never were truer words than those which say that a good woman's price is far above rubies."

And Hal, listening to Addie's happy laugh ringing across the lawn, raised his hat as he reverently murmured, "Heaven bless them, and make us worthy of their devotion."

