

**ГАРРИЕТ
БИЧЕР-СТОУ**

PINK AND

WHITE

TYRANNY

Harriet Beecher Stowe
Pink and White Tyranny

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Harriet Beecher Stowe

Pink and White Tyranny / A Society Novel

PREFACE

MY Dear Reader,—This story is not to be a novel, as the world understands the word; and we tell you so beforehand, lest you be in ill-humor by not finding what you expected. For if you have been told that your dinner is to be salmon and green peas, and made up your mind to that bill of fare, and then, on coming to the table, find that it is beefsteak and tomatoes, you may be out of sorts; *not* because beefsteak and tomatoes are not respectable viands, but because they are not what you have made up your mind to enjoy.

Now, a novel, in our days, is a three-story affair,—a complicated, complex, multiform composition, requiring no end of scenery and *dramatis personæ*, and plot and plan, together with trap-doors, pit-falls, wonderful escapes and thrilling dangers; and the scenes transport one all over the earth,—to England, Italy, Switzerland, Japan, and Kamtschatka. But this is a little commonplace history, all about one man and one woman, living straight along in one little prosaic town in New England. It is, moreover, a story with a moral; and for fear that you shouldn't find out exactly what the moral is, we shall adopt the plan of the painter who wrote under his pictures, "This is a bear," and "This is a turtle-dove." We shall tell you in the proper time succinctly just what the moral is, and send you off edified as if you had been hearing a sermon. So please to call this little sketch a parable, and wait for the exposition thereof.

PINK AND WHITE TYRANNY

CHAPTER I

FALLING IN LOVE

“WHO *is* that beautiful creature?” said John Seymour, as a light, sylph-like form tripped up the steps of the veranda of the hotel where he was lounging away his summer vacation.

“That! Why, don’t you know, man? That is the celebrated, the divine Lillie Ellis, the most adroit ‘fisher of men’ that has been seen in our days.”

“By George, but she’s pretty, though!” said John, following with enchanted eyes the distant motions of the sylphide.

The vision that he saw was of a delicate little fairy form; a complexion of pearly white, with a cheek of the hue of a pink shell; a fair, sweet, infantine face surrounded by a fleecy radiance of soft golden hair. The vision appeared to float in some white gauzy robes; and, when she spoke or smiled, what an innocent, fresh, untouched, unspoiled look there was upon the face! John gazed, and thought of all sorts of poetical similes: of a “daisy just wet with morning dew;” of a “violet by a mossy stone;” in short, of all the things that poets have made and provided for the use of young gentlemen in the way of falling in love.

This John Seymour was about as good and honest a man as there is going in this world of ours. He was a generous, just, manly, religious young fellow. He was heir to a large, solid property; he was a well-read lawyer, established in a flourishing business; he was a man that all the world spoke well of, and had cause to speak well of. The only duty to society which John had left as yet unperformed was that of matrimony. Three and thirty years had passed; and, with every advantage for supporting a wife, with a charming home all ready for a mistress, John, as yet, had not proposed to be the defender and provider for any of the more helpless portion of creation. The cause of this was, in the first place, that John was very happy in the society of a sister, a little older than himself, who managed his house admirably, and was a charming companion to his leisure hours; and, in the second place, that he had a secret, bashful self-depreciation in regard to his power of pleasing women, which made him ill at ease in their society. Not that he did not mean to marry. He certainly did. But the fair being that he was to marry was a distant ideal, a certain undefined and cloudlike creature; and, up to this time, he had been waiting to meet her, without taking any definite steps towards that end. To say the truth, John Seymour, like many other outwardly solid, sober-minded, respectable citizens, had deep within himself a little private bit of romance. He could not utter it, he never talked it; he would have blushed and stammered and stuttered wofully, and made a very poor figure, in trying to tell any one about it; but nevertheless it was there, a secluded chamber of imagery, and the future Mrs. John Seymour formed its principal ornament.

The wife that John had imaged, his *dream*-wife, was not at all like his sister; though he loved his sister heartily, and thought her one of the best and noblest women that could possibly be.

But his sister was all plain prose,—good, strong, earnest, respectable prose, it is true, but yet prose. He could read English history with her, talk accounts and business with her, discuss politics with her, and valued her opinions on all these topics as much as that of any man of his acquaintance. But, with the visionary Mrs. John Seymour aforesaid, he never seemed to himself to be either reading history or settling accounts, or talking politics; he was off with her in some sort of enchanted cloudland of happiness, where she was all to him, and he to her,—a sort of rapture of protective love on one

side, and of confiding devotion on the other, quite inexpressible, and that John would not have talked of for the world.

So when he saw this distant vision of airy gauzes, of pearly whiteness, of sea-shell pink, of infantine smiles, and waving, golden curls, he stood up with a shy desire to approach the wonderful creature, and yet with a sort of embarrassed feeling of being very awkward and clumsy. He felt, somehow, as if he were a great, coarse behemoth; his arms seemed to him awkward appendages; his hands suddenly appeared to him rough, and his fingers swelled and stumpy. When he thought of asking an introduction, he felt himself growing very hot, and blushing to the roots of his hair.

“Want to be introduced to her, Seymour?” said Carryl Ethridge. “I’ll trot you up. I know her.”

“No, thank you,” said John, stiffly. In his heart, he felt an absurd anger at Carryl for the easy, assured way in which he spoke of the sacred creature who seemed to him something too divine to be lightly talked of. And then he saw Carryl marching up to her with his air of easy assurance. He saw the bewitching smile come over that fair, flowery face; he saw Carryl, with unabashed familiarity, take her fan out of her hand, look at it as if it were a mere common, earthly fan, toss it about, and pretend to fan himself with it.

“I didn’t know he was such a puppy!” said John to himself, as he stood in a sort of angry bashfulness, envying the man that was so familiar with that loveliness.

Ah! John, John! You wouldn’t, for the world, have told to man or woman what a fool you were at that moment.

“What a fool I am!” was his mental commentary: “just as if it was any thing to me.” And he turned, and walked to the other end of the veranda.

“I think you’ve hooked another fish, Lillie,” said Belle Trevors in the ear of the little divinity.

“Who. . . ?”

“Why! that Seymour there, at the end of the veranda. He is looking at you, do you know? He is rich, very rich, and of an old family. Didn’t you see how he started and looked after you when you came up on the veranda?”

“Oh! I saw plain enough,” said the divinity, with one of her unconscious, baby-like smiles.

“What are you ladies talking?” said Carryl Ethridge.

“Oh, secrets!” said Belle Trevors. “You are very presuming, sir, to inquire.”

“Mr. Ethridge,” said Lillie Ellis, “don’t you think it would be nice to promenade?”

This was said with such a pretty coolness, such a quiet composure, as showed Miss Lillie to be quite mistress of the situation; there was, of course, no sort of design in it.

Ethridge offered his arm at once; and the two sauntered to the end of the veranda, where John Seymour was standing.

The blood rushed in hot currents over him, and he could hear the beating of his heart: he felt somehow as if the hour of his fate was coming. He had a wild desire to retreat, and put it off. He looked over the end of the veranda, with some vague idea of leaping it; but alas! it was ten feet above ground, and a lover’s leap would have only ticketed him as out of his head. There was nothing for it but to meet his destiny like a man.

Carryl came up with the lady on his arm; and as he stood there for a moment, in the coolest, most indifferent tone in the world, said, “Oh! by the by, Miss Ellis, let me present my friend Mr. Seymour.”

The die was cast.

John’s face burned like fire: he muttered something about “being happy to make Miss Ellis’s acquaintance,” looking all the time as if he would be glad to jump over the railing, or take wings and fly, to get rid of the happiness.

Miss Ellis was a belle by profession, and she understood her business perfectly. In nothing did she show herself master of her craft, more than in the adroitness with which she could soothe the bashful pangs of new votaries, and place them on an easy footing with her.

“Mr. Seymour,” she said affably, “to tell the truth, I have been desirous of the honor of your acquaintance, ever since I saw you in the breakfast-room this morning.”

“I am sure I am very much flattered,” said John, his heart beating thick and fast. “May I ask why you honor me with such a wish?”

“Well, to tell the truth, because you strikingly resemble a very dear friend of mine,” said Miss Ellis, with her sweet, unconscious simplicity of manner.

“I am still more flattered,” said John, with a quicker beating of the heart; “only I fear that you may find me an unpleasant contrast.”

“Oh! I think not,” said Lillie, with another smile: “we shall soon be good friends, too, I trust.”

“I trust so certainly,” said John, earnestly.

Belle Trevors now joined the party; and the four were soon chatting together on the best footing of acquaintance. John was delighted to feel himself already on easy terms with the fair vision.

“You have not been here long?” said Lillie to John.

“No, I have only just arrived.”

“And you were never here before?”

“No, Miss Ellis, I am entirely new to the place.”

“I am an old *habituée* here,” said Lillie, “and can recommend myself as authority on all points connected with it.”

“Then,” said John, “I hope you will take me under your tuition.”

“Certainly, free of charge,” she said, with another ravishing smile.

“You haven’t seen the boiling spring yet?” she added.

“No, I haven’t seen any thing yet.”

“Well, then, if you’ll give me your arm across the lawn, I’ll show it to you.”

All of this was done in the easiest, most matter-of-course manner in the world; and off they started, John in a flutter of flattered delight at the gracious acceptance accorded to him.

Ethridge and Belle Trevors looked after them with a nod of intelligence at each other.

“Hooked, by George!” said Ethridge.

“Well, it’ll be a good thing for Lillie, won’t it?”

“For her? Oh, yes, a capital thing *for her!*”

“Well, for *him* too.”

“Well, I don’t know. John is a pretty nice fellow; a very nice fellow, besides being rich, and all that; and Lillie is somewhat shop-worn by this time. Let me see: she must be seven and twenty.”

“Oh, yes, she’s all that!” said Belle, with ingenuous ardor. “Why, she was in society while I was a school-girl! Yes, dear Lillie is certainly twenty-seven, if not more; but she keeps her freshness wonderfully.”

“Well, she looks fresh enough, I suppose, to a good, honest, artless fellow like John Seymour, who knows as little of the world as a milkmaid. John is a great, innocent, country steer, fed on clover and dew; and as honest and ignorant of all sorts of naughty, wicked things as his mother or sister. He takes Lillie in a sacred simplicity quite refreshing; but to me Lillie is played out. I know her like a book. I know all her smiles and wiles, advices and devices; and her system of tactics is an old story with me. I shan’t interrupt any of her little games. Let her have her little field all to herself: it’s time she was married, to be sure.”

Meanwhile, John was being charmingly ciceroned by Lillie, and scarcely knew whether he was in the body or out. All that he felt, and felt with a sort of wonder, was that he seemed to be acceptable and pleasing in the eyes of this little fairy, and that she was leading him into wonderland.

They went not only to the boiling spring, but up and down so many wild, woodland paths that had been cut for the adornment of the Carmel Springs, and so well pleased were both parties, that it was supper-time before they reappeared on the lawn; and, when they did appear, Lillie was leaning

confidentially on John's arm, with a wreath of woodbine in her hair that he had arranged there, wondering all the while at his own wonderful boldness, and at the grace of the fair entertainer.

The returning couple were seen from the windows of Mrs. Chit, who sat on the lookout for useful information; and who forthwith ran to the apartments of Mrs. Chat, and told her to look out at them.

Billy This, who was smoking his cigar on the veranda, immediately ran and called Harry That to look at them, and laid a bet at once that Lillie had "hooked" Seymour.

"She'll have him, by George, she will!"

"Oh, pshaw! she is always hooking fellows, but you see she don't get married," said matter-of-fact Harry. "It won't come to any thing, now, I'll bet. Everybody said she was engaged to Danforth, but it all ended in smoke."

Whether it would be an engagement, or would all end in smoke, was the talk of Carmel Springs for the next two weeks.

At the end of that time, the mind of Carmel Springs was relieved by the announcement that it was an engagement.

The important deciding announcement was first authentically made by Lillie to Belle Trevors, who had been invited into her room that night for the purpose.

"Well, Belle, it's all over. He spoke out to-night."

"He offered himself?"

"Certainly."

"And you took him?"

"Of course I did: I should be a fool not to."

"Oh, so I think, decidedly!" said Belle, kissing her friend in a rapture. "You dear creature! how nice! it's splendid!"

Lillie took the embrace with her usual sweet composure, and turned to her looking-glass, and began taking down her hair for the night. It will be perceived that this young lady was not overcome with emotion, but in a perfectly collected state of mind.

"He's a little bald, and getting rather stout," she said reflectively, "but he'll do."

"I never saw a creature so dead in love as he is," said Belle.

A quiet smile passed over the soft, peach-blow cheeks as Lillie answered,—

"Oh, dear, yes! He perfectly worships the ground I tread on."

"Lil, you fortunate creature, you! Positively it's the best match that there has been about here this summer. He's rich, of an old, respectable family; and then he has good principles, you know, and all that," said Belle.

"I think he's nice myself," said Lillie, as she stood brushing out a golden tangle of curls. "Dear me!" she added, "how much better he is than that Danforth! Really, Danforth was a little too horrid: his teeth were dreadful. Do you know, I should have had something of a struggle to take him, though he was so terribly rich? Then Danforth had been horridly dissipated,—you don't know,—Maria Sanford told me such shocking things about him, and she knows they are true. Now, I don't think John has ever been dissipated."

"Oh, no!" said Belle. "I heard all about him. He joined the church when he was only twenty, and has been always spoken of as a perfect model. I only think you may find it a little slow, living in Springdale. He has a fine, large, old-fashioned house there, and his sister is a very nice woman; but they are a sort of respectable, retired set,—never go into fashionable company."

"Oh, I don't mind it!" said Lillie. "I shall have things my own way, I know. One isn't obliged to live in Springdale, nor with pokey old sisters, you know; and John will do just as I say, and live where I please."

She said this with her simple, soft air of perfect assurance, twisting her shower of bright, golden curls; with her gentle, childlike face, and soft, beseeching, blue eyes, and dimpling little mouth,

looking back on her, out of the mirror. By these the little queen had always ruled from her cradle, and should she not rule now? Was it any wonder that John was half out of his wits with joy at thought of possessing *her*? Simply and honestly, she thought not. He was to be congratulated; though it wasn't a bad thing for her, either.

"Belle," said Lillie, after an interval of reflection, "I won't be married in white satin,—that I'm resolved on. Now," she said, facing round with increasing earnestness, "there have been five weddings in our set, and all the girls have been married in just the same dress,—white satin and point lace, white satin and point lace, over and over, till I'm tired of it. *I'm* determined I'll have something new."

"Well, I would, I'm sure," said Belle. "Say white tulle, for instance: you know you are so *petite* and fairy-like."

"No: I shall write out to Madame La Roche, and tell her she must get up something wholly original. I shall send for my whole *trousseau*. Papa will be glad enough to come down, since he gets me off his hands, and no more fuss about bills, you know. Do you know, Belle, that creature is just wild about me: he'd like to ransack all the jewellers' shops in New York for me. He's going up to-morrow, just to choose the engagement ring. He says he can't trust to an order; that he must go and choose one worthy of me."

"Oh! it's plain enough that that game is all in your hands, as to him, Lillie; but, Lil, what will your Cousin Harry say to all this?"

"Well, of course he won't like it; but I can't help it if he don't. Harry ought to know that it's all nonsense for him and me to think of marrying. He does know it."

"To tell the truth, I always thought, Lil, you were more in love with Harry than anybody you ever knew."

Lillie laughed a little, and then the prettiest sweet-pea flush deepened the pink of her cheeks.

"To say the truth, Belle, I could have been, if he had been in circumstances to marry. But, you see, I am one of those to whom the luxuries are essential. I never could rub and scrub and work; in fact, I had rather not live at all than live poor; and Harry is poor, and he always will be poor. It's a pity, too, poor fellow, for he's nice. Well, he is off in India! I know he will be tragical and gloomy, and all that," she said; and then the soft child-face smiled to itself in the glass,—such a pretty little innocent smile!

All this while, John sat up with his heart beating very fast, writing all about his engagement to his sister, and, up to this point, his nearest, dearest, most confidential friend. It is almost too bad to copy the letter of a shy man who finds himself in love for the first time in his life; but we venture to make an extract:—

"It is not her beauty merely that drew me to her, though she is the most beautiful human being I ever saw: it is the exquisite feminine softness and delicacy of her character, that sympathetic pliability by which she adapts herself to every varying feeling of the heart. You, my dear sister, are the noblest of women, and your place in my heart is still what it always was; but I feel that this dear little creature, while she fills a place no other has ever entered, will yet be a new bond to unite us. She will love us both; she will gradually come into all our ways and opinions, and be insensibly formed by us into a noble womanhood. Her extreme beauty, and the great admiration that has always followed her, have exposed her to many temptations, and caused most ungenerous things to be said of her.

"Hitherto she has lived only in the fashionable world; and her literary and domestic education, as she herself is sensible, has been somewhat neglected.

"But she longs to retire from all this; she is sick of fashionable folly, and will come to us to be all our own. Gradually the charming circle of cultivated families which form our society will elevate her taste, and form her mind.

“Love is woman’s inspiration, and love will lead her to all that is noble and good. My dear sister, think not that any new ties are going to make you any less to me, or touch your place in my heart. I have already spoken of you to Lillie, and she longs to know you. You must be to her what you have always been to me,—guide, philosopher, and friend.

“I am sure I never felt better impulses, more humble, more thankful, more religious, than I do now. That the happiness of this soft, gentle, fragile creature is to be henceforth in my hands is to me a solemn and inspiring thought. What man is worthy of a refined, delicate woman? I feel my unworthiness of her every hour; but, so help me God, I shall try to be all to her that a husband should; and you, my sister, I know, will help me to make happy the future which she so confidingly trusts to me.

“Believe me, dear sister, I never was so much your affectionate brother,
John Seymour.

“P.S.—I forgot to tell you that Lillie remarkably resembles the ivory miniature of our dear sainted mother. She was very much affected when I told her of it. I think naturally Lillie has very much such a character as our mother; though circumstances, in her case, have been unfavorable to the development of it.”

Whether the charming vision was realized; whether the little sovereign now enthroned will be a just and clement one; what immunities and privileges she will allow to her slaves,—is yet to be seen in this story.

CHAPTER II

WHAT SHE THINKS OF IT

SPRINGDALE was one of those beautiful rural towns whose flourishing aspect is a striking exponent of the peculiarities of New-England life. The ride through it presents a refreshing picture of wide, cool, grassy streets, overhung with green arches of elm, with rows of large, handsome houses on either side, each standing back from the street in its own retired square of gardens, green turf, shady trees, and flowering shrubs. It was, so to speak, a little city of country-seats. It spoke of wealth, thrift, leisure, cultivation, quiet, thoughtful habits, and moral tastes.

Some of these mansions were of ancestral reputation, and had been in the family whose name they bore for generations back; a circumstance sometimes occurring even in New-England towns where neither law nor custom unites to perpetuate property in certain family lines.

The Seymour house was a well-known, respected mansion for generations back. Old Judge Seymour, the grandfather, was the lineal descendant of Parson Seymour; the pastor who first came with the little colony of Springdale, when it was founded as a church in the wilderness, amid all the dangers of wild beasts and Indians.

This present Seymour mansion was founded on the spot where the house of the first minister was built by the active hands of his parishioners; and, from generation to generation, order, piety, education, and high respectability had been the tradition of the place.

The reader will come in with us, on this bright June morning, through the grassy front yard, which has only the usual New-England fault of being too densely shaded. The house we enter has a wide, cool hall running through its centre and out into a back garden, now all aglow with every beauty of June. The broad alleys of the garden showed bright stores of all sorts of good old-fashioned flowers, well tended and kept. Clumps of stately hollyhocks and scarlet peonies; roses of every hue, purple, blush, gold-color, and white, were showering down their leaves on the grassy turf; honeysuckles climbed and clambered over arbors; and great, stately tufts of virgin-white lilies exalted their majestic heads in saintly magnificence. The garden was Miss Grace Seymour's delight and pride. Every root in it was fragrant with the invisible blossoms of memory,—memories of the mother who loved and planted and watched them before her, and the grandmother who had cared for them before that. The spirit of these charming old-fashioned gardens is the spirit of family love; and, if ever blessed souls from their better home feel drawn back to any thing on earth, we think it must be to their flower-garden.

Miss Grace had been up early, and now, with her garden hat on, and scissors in hand, was coming up the steps with her white apron full of roses, white lilies, meadow-sweets, and honeysuckle, for the parlor-vases, when the servant handed her a letter.

"From John," she said, "good fellow;" and then she laid it on the mantel-shelf of the parlor, while she busied herself in arranging her flowers.

"I must get these into water, or they will wilt," she said.

The large parlor was like many that you and I have seen in a certain respectable class of houses,—wide, cool, shady, and with a mellow *old* tone to every thing in its furniture and belongings. It was a parlor of the past, and not of to-day, yet exquisitely neat and well-kept. The Turkey carpet was faded: it had been part of the wedding furnishing of Grace's mother, years ago. The great, wide, motherly, chintz-covered sofa, which filled a recess commanding the window, was as different as possible from any smart modern article of the name. The heavy, claw-footed, mahogany chairs; the tall clock that ticked in one corner; the footstools and ottomans in faded embroidery,—all spoke of days past. So did the portraits on the wall. One was of a fair, rosy young girl, in a white gown, with powdered hair

dressed high over a cushion. It was the portrait of Grace's mother. Another was that of a minister in gown and bands, with black-silk gloved hands holding up conspicuously a large Bible. This was the remote ancestor, the minister. Then there was the picture of John's father, placed lovingly where the eyes seemed always to be following the slight, white-robed figure of the young wife. The walls were papered with an old-fashioned paper of a peculiar pattern, bought in France seventy-five years before. The vases of India-china that adorned the mantels, the framed engravings of architecture and pictures in Rome, all were memorials of the taste of those long passed away. Yet the room had a fresh, sweet, sociable air. The roses and honeysuckles looked in at the windows; the table covered with books and magazines, and the familiar work-basket of Miss Grace, with its work, gave a sort of impression of modern family household life. It was a wide, open, hospitable, generous-minded room, that seemed to breathe a fragrance of invitation and general sociability; it was a room full of associations and memories, and its daily arrangement and ornamentation made one of the pleasant tasks of Miss Grace's life.

She spread down a newspaper on the large, square centre-table, and, emptying her apronful of flowers upon it, took her vases from the shelf, and with her scissors sat down to the task of clipping and arranging them.

Just then Letitia Ferguson came across the garden, and entered the back door after her, with a knot of choice roses in her hand, and a plate of seed-cakes covered with a hem-stitched napkin. The Fergusons and the Seymours occupied adjoining houses, and were on footing of the most perfect undress intimacy. They crossed each other's gardens, and came without knocking into each other's doors twenty times a day, *apropos* to any bit of chit-chat that they might have, a question to ask, a passage in a book to show, a household receipt that they had been trying. Letitia was the most intimate and confidential friend of Grace. In fact, the whole Ferguson family seemed like another portion of the Seymour family. There were two daughters, of whom Letitia was the eldest. Then came the younger Rose, a nice, charming, well-informed, good girl, always cheerful and chatty, and with a decent share of ability at talking lively nonsense. The brothers of the family, like the young men of New-England country towns generally, were off in the world seeking their fortunes. Old Judge Ferguson was a gentleman of the old school,—formal, stately, polite, always complimentary to ladies, and with a pleasant little budget of old-gentlemanly hobbies and prejudices, which it afforded him the greatest pleasure to air in the society of his friends. Old Mrs. Ferguson was a pattern of motherliness, with her quaint, old-fashioned dress, her elaborate caps, her daily and minute inquiries after the health of all her acquaintances, and the tender pityingness of her nature for every thing that lived and breathed in this world of sin and sorrow.

Letitia and Grace, as two older sisters of families, had a peculiar intimacy, and discussed every thing together, from the mode of clearing jelly up to the profoundest problems of science and morals. They were both charming, well-mannered, well-educated, well-read women, and trusted each other to the uttermost with every thought and feeling and purpose of their hearts.

As we have said, Letitia Ferguson came in at the back door without knocking, and, coming softly behind Miss Grace, laid down her bunch of roses among the flowers, and then set down her plate of seed-cakes.

Then she said, "I brought you some specimens of my Souvenir de Malmaison bush, and my first trial of your receipt."

"Oh, thanks!" said Miss Grace: "how charming those roses are! It was too bad to spoil your bush, though."

"No: it does it good to cut them; it will flower all the more. But try one of those cakes,—are they right?"

"Excellent! you have hit it exactly," said Grace; "exactly the right proportion of seeds. I was hurrying," she added, "to get these flowers in water, because a letter from John is waiting to be read."

“A letter! How nice!” said Miss Letitia, looking towards the shelf. “John is as faithful in writing as if he were your lover.”

“He is the best lover a woman can have,” said Grace, as she busily sorted and arranged the flowers. “For my part, I ask nothing better than John.”

“Let me arrange for you, while you read your letter,” said Letitia, taking the flowers from her friend’s hands.

Miss Grace took down the letter from the mantelpiece, opened, and began to read it. Miss Letitia, meanwhile, watched her face, as we often carelessly watch the face of a person reading a letter.

Miss Grace was not technically handsome, but she had an interesting, kindly, sincere face; and her friend saw gradually a dark cloud rising over it, as one watches a shadow on a field.

When she had finished the letter, with a sudden movement she laid her head forward on the table among the flowers, and covered her face with her hands. She seemed not to remember that any one was present.

Letitia came up to her, and, laying her hand gently on hers, said, “What is it, dear?”

Miss Grace lifted her head, and said in a husky voice,—

“Nothing, only it is so sudden! John is engaged!”

“Engaged! to whom?”

“To Lillie Ellis.”

“John engaged to Lillie Ellis?” said Miss Ferguson, in a tone of shocked astonishment.

“So he writes me. He is completely infatuated by her.”

“How very sudden!” said Miss Letitia. “Who could have expected it? Lillie Ellis is so entirely out of the line of any of the women he has ever known.”

“That’s precisely what’s the matter,” said Miss Grace. “John knows nothing of any but good, noble women; and he thinks he sees all this in Lillie Ellis.”

“There’s nothing to her but her wonderful complexion,” said Miss Ferguson, “and her pretty little coaxing ways; but she is the most utterly selfish, heartless little creature that ever breathed.”

“Well, *she* is to be John’s wife,” said Miss Grace, sweeping the remainder of the flowers into her apron; “and so ends my life with John. I might have known it would come to this. I must make arrangements at once for another house and home. This house, so much, so dear to me, will be nothing to her; and yet she must be its mistress,” she added, looking round on every thing in the room, and then bursting into tears.

Now, Miss Grace was not one of the crying sort, and so this emotion went to her friend’s heart. Miss Letitia went up and put her arms round her.

“Come, Gracie,” she said, “you must not take it so seriously. John is a noble, manly fellow. He loves you, and he will always be master of his own house.”

“No, he won’t,—no married man ever is,” said Miss Grace, wiping her eyes, and sitting up very straight. “No man, that is a gentleman, is ever master in his own house. He has only such rights there as his wife chooses to give him; and this woman won’t like me, I’m sure.”

“Perhaps she will,” said Letitia, in a faltering voice.

“No, she won’t; because I have no faculty for lying, or playing the hypocrite in any way, and I shan’t approve of her. These soft, slippery, pretty little fibbing women have always been my abomination.”

“Oh, my *dear* Grace!” said Miss Ferguson, “do let us make the best of it.”

“I *did* think,” said Miss Grace, wiping her eyes, “that John had some sense. I wasn’t such a fool, nor so selfish, as to want him always to live for me. I wanted him to marry; and if he had got engaged to your Rose, for instance . . . O Letitia! I always did so *hope* that he and Rose would like each other.”

“We can’t choose for our brothers,” said Miss Letitia, “and, hard as it is, we must make up our minds to love those they bring to us. Who knows what good influences may do for poor Lillie Ellis? She never has had any yet. Her family are extremely common sort of people, without any culture or

breeding, and only her wonderful beauty brought them into notice; and they have always used that as a sort of stock in trade.”

“And John says, in this letter, that she reminds him of our mother,” said Miss Grace; “and he thinks that naturally she was very much such a character. Just think of that, now!”

“He must be far gone,” said Miss Ferguson; “but then, you see, she is distractingly pretty. She has just the most exquisitely pearly, pure, delicate, saint-like look, at times, that you ever saw; and then she knows exactly how she does look, and just how to use her looks; and John can’t be blamed for believing in her. I, who know all about her, am sometimes taken in by her.”

“Well,” said Miss Grace, “Mrs. Lennox was at Newport last summer at the time that she was there, and she told me all about her. I think her an artful, unscrupulous, unprincipled woman, and her being made mistress of this house just breaks up our pleasant sociable life here. She has no literary tastes; she does not care for reading or study; she won’t like our set here, and she will gradually drive them from the house. She won’t like me, and she will want to alienate John from me,—so there is just the situation.”

“You may read that letter,” added Miss Grace, wiping her eyes, and tossing her brother’s letter into Miss Letitia’s lap. Miss Letitia took the letter and read it. “Good fellow!” she exclaimed warmly, “you see just what I say,—his heart is all with you.”

“Oh, John’s heart is all right enough!” said Miss Grace; “and I don’t doubt his love. He’s the best, noblest, most affectionate fellow in the world. I only think he reckons without his host, in thinking he can keep all our old relations unbroken, when he puts a new mistress into the house, and such a mistress.”

“But if she really loves him”—

“Pshaw! she don’t. That kind of woman can’t love. They are like cats, that want to be stroked and caressed, and to be petted, and to lie soft and warm; and they will purr to any one that will pet them, —that’s all. As for love that leads to any self-sacrifice, they don’t begin to know any thing about it.”

“Gracie dear,” said Miss Ferguson, “this sort of thing will never do. If you meet your brother in this way, you will throw him off, and, maybe, make a fatal breach. Meet it like a good Christian, as you are. You know,” she said gently, “where we have a right to carry our troubles, and of whom we should ask guidance.”

“Oh, I do know, ’Titia!” said Miss Grace; “but I am letting myself be wicked just a little, you know, to relieve my mind. I ought to put myself to school to make the best of it; but it came on me so *very* suddenly. Yes,” she added, “I am going to take a course of my Bible and Fénelon before I see John,—poor fellow.”

“And try to have faith for her,” said Miss Letitia.

“Well, I’ll try to have faith,” said Miss Grace; “but I do trust it will be some days before John comes down on me with his raptures,—men in love are such fools.”

“But, dear me!” said Miss Letitia, as her head accidentally turned towards the window; “who is this riding up? Gracie, as sure as you live, it is John himself!”

“John himself!” repeated Miss Grace, becoming pale.

“Now do, dear, be careful,” said Miss Letitia. “I’ll just run out this back door and leave you alone;” and just as Miss Letitia’s light heels were heard going down the back steps, John’s heavy footsteps were coming up the front ones.

CHAPTER III

THE SISTER

GRACE SEYMOUR was a specimen of a class of whom we are happy to say New England possesses a great many.

She was a highly cultivated, intelligent, and refined woman, arrived at the full age of mature womanhood unmarried, and with no present thought or prospect of marriage. I presume all my readers, who are in a position to run over the society of our rural New-England towns, can recall to their minds hundreds of such. They are women too thoughtful, too conscientious, too delicate, to marry for any thing but a purely personal affection; and this affection, for various reasons, has not fallen in their way.

The tendency of life in these towns is to throw the young men of the place into distant fields of adventure and enterprise in the far Western and Southern States, leaving at their old homes a population in which the feminine element largely predominates. It is not, generally speaking, the most cultivated or the most attractive of the brethren who remain in the place where they were born. The ardent, the daring, the enterprising, are off to the ends of the earth; and the choice of the sisters who remain at home is, therefore, confined to a restricted list; and so it ends in these delightful rose-gardens of single women which abound in New England,—women who remain at home as housekeepers to aged parents, and charming persons in society; women over whose graces of conversation and manner the married men in their vicinity go off into raptures of eulogium, which generally end with, “Why hasn’t that woman ever got married?”

It often happens to such women to expend on some brother that stock of hero-worship and devotion which it has not come in their way to give to a nearer friend. Alas! it is building on a sandy foundation; for, just as the union of hearts is complete, the chemical affinity which began in the cradle, and strengthens with every year of life, is dissolved by the introduction of that third element which makes of the brother a husband, while the new combination casts out the old,—sometimes with a disagreeable effervescence.

John and Grace Seymour were two only children of a very affectionate family; and they had grown up in the closest habits of intimacy. They had written to each other those long letters in which thoughtful people who live in retired situations delight; letters not of outward events, but of sentiments and opinions, the phases of the inner life. They had studied and pursued courses of reading together. They had together organized and carried on works of benevolence and charity.

The brother and sister had been left joint heirs of a large manufacturing property, employing hundreds of hands, in their vicinity; and the care and cultivation of these work-people, the education of their children, had been most conscientiously upon their minds. Half of every Sunday they devoted together to labors in the Sunday school of their manufacturing village; and the two worked so harmoniously together in the interests of their life, that Grace had never felt the want of any domestic ties or relations other than those that she had.

Our readers may perhaps, therefore, concede that, among the many claimants for their sympathy in this cross-grained world of ours, some few grains of it may properly be due to Grace.

Things are trials that try us: afflictions are what afflict us; and, under this showing, Grace was both tried and afflicted by the sudden engagement of her brother. When the whole groundwork on which one’s daily life is built caves in, and falls into the cellar without one moment’s warning, it is not in human nature to pick one’s self up, and reconstruct and rearrange in a moment. So Grace thought, at any rate; but she made a hurried effort to dash back her tears, and gulp down a rising in her throat, anxious only not to be selfish, and not to disgust her brother in the outset with any personal egotism.

So she ran to the front door to meet him, and fell into his arms, trying so hard to seem congratulatory and affectionate that she broke out into sobbing.

“My dear Gracie,” said John, embracing and kissing her with that gushing fervor with which newly engaged gentlemen are apt to deluge every creature whom they meet, “you’ve got my letter. Well, were not you astonished?”

“O John, it was so sudden!” was all poor Grace could say. “And you know, John, since mother died, you and I have been all in all to each other.”

“And so we shall be, Gracie. Why, yes, of course we shall,” he said, stroking her hair, and playing with her trembling, thin, white hands. “Why, this only makes me love you the more now; and you will love my little Lillie: fact is, you can’t help it. We shall both of us be happier for having her here.”

“Well, you know, John, I never saw her,” said Grace, deprecatingly, “and so you can’t wonder.”

“Oh, yes, of course! Don’t wonder in the least. It comes rather sudden,—and then you haven’t seen her. Look, here is her photograph!” said John, producing one from the most orthodox innermost region, directly over his heart. “Look there! isn’t it beautiful?”

“It is a very sweet face,” said Grace, exerting herself to be sympathetic, and thankful that she could say that much truthfully.

“I can’t imagine,” said John, “what ever made her like me. You know she has refused half the fellows in the country. I hadn’t the remotest idea that she would have any thing to say to me; but you see there’s no accounting for tastes;” and John plumed himself, as young gentlemen do who have carried off prizes.

“You see,” he added, “it’s odd, but she took a fancy to me the first time she saw me. Now, you know, Gracie, I never found it easy to get along with ladies at first; but Lillie has the most extraordinary way of putting a fellow at his ease. Why, she made me feel like an old friend the first hour.”

“Indeed!”

“Look here,” said John, triumphantly drawing out his pocket-book, and producing thence a knot of rose-colored satin ribbon. “Did you ever see such a lovely color as this? It’s so exquisite, you see! Well, she always is wearing just such knots of ribbon, the most lovely shades. Why, there isn’t one woman in a thousand could wear the things she does. Every thing becomes her. Sometimes it’s rose color, or lilac, or pale blue,—just the most trying things to others are what she can wear.”

“Dear John, I hope you looked for something deeper than the complexion in a wife,” said Grace, driven to moral reflections in spite of herself.

“Oh, of course!” said John: “she has such soft, gentle, winning ways; she is so sympathetic; she’s just the wife to make home happy, to be a bond of union to us all. Now, in a wife, what we want is just that. Lillie’s mind, for instance, hasn’t been cultivated as yours and Letitia’s. She isn’t at all that sort of girl. She’s just a dear, gentle, little confiding creature, that you’ll delight in. You’ll form her mind, and she’ll look up to you. You know she’s young yet.”

“Young, John! Why, she’s seven and twenty,” said Grace, with astonishment.

“Oh, no, my dear Gracie! that is all a mistake. She told me herself she’s only twenty. You see, the trouble is, she went into company injudiciously early, a mere baby, in fact; and that causes her to have the name of being older than she is. But, I do assure you, she’s only twenty. She told me so herself.”

“Oh, indeed!” said Grace, prudently choking back the contradiction which she longed to utter. “I know it seems a good many summers since I heard of her as a belle at Newport.”

“Ah, yes, exactly! You see she went into company, as a young lady, when she was only thirteen. She told me all about it. Her parents were very injudicious, and they pushed her forward. She regrets it now. She knows that it wasn’t the thing at all. She’s very sensitive to the defects in her early education; but I made her understand that it was the *heart* more than the head that I cared for. I dare say, Gracie,

she'll fall into all our little ways without really knowing; and you, in point of fact, will be mistress of the house as much as you ever were. Lillie is delicate, and never has had any care, and will be only too happy to depend on you. She's one of the gentle, dependent sort, you know."

To this statement, Grace did not reply. She only began nervously sweeping together the *débris* of leaves and flowers which encumbered the table, on which the newly arranged flower-vases were standing. Then she arranged the vases with great precision on the mantel-shelf. As she was doing it, so many memories rushed over her of that room and her mother, and the happy, peaceful family life that had hitherto been led there, that she quite broke down; and, sitting down in the chair, she covered her face, and went off in a good, hearty crying spell.

Poor John was inexpressibly shocked. He loved and revered his sister beyond any thing in the world; and it occurred to him, in a dim wise, that to be suddenly dispossessed and shut out in the cold, when one has hitherto been the first object of affection, is, to make the best of it, a real and sore trial.

But Grace soon recovered herself, and rose up smiling through her tears. "What a fool I am making of myself!" she said. "The fact is, John, I am only a little nervous. You mustn't mind it. You know," she said, laughing, "we old maids are like cats,—we find it hard to be put out of our old routine. I dare say we shall all of us be happier in the end for this, and I shall try to do all I can to make it so. Perhaps, John, I'd better take that little house of mine on Elm Street, and set up my tent in it, and take all the old furniture and old pictures, and old-time things. You'll be wanting to modernize and make over this house, you know, to suit a young wife."

"Nonsense, Gracie; no such thing!" said John. "Do you suppose I want to leave all the past associations of my life, and strip my home bare of all pleasant memorials, because I bring a little wife here? Why, the very idea of a wife is somebody to sympathize in your tastes; and Lillie will love and appreciate all these dear old things as you and I do. She has such a sympathetic heart! If you want to make me happy, Gracie, stay here, and let us live, as near as may be, as before."

"So we will, John," said Grace, so cheerfully that John considered the whole matter as settled, and rushed upstairs to write his daily letter to Lillie.

CHAPTER IV

PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

MISS LILLIE ELLIS was sitting upstairs in her virgin bower, which was now converted into a tumultuous, seething caldron of millinery and mantua-making, such as usually precedes a wedding. To be sure, orders had been forthwith despatched to Paris for the bridal regimentals, and for a good part of the *trousseau*; but that did not seem in the least to stand in the way of the time-honored confusion of sewing preparations at home, which is supposed to waste the strength and exhaust the health of every bride elect.

Whether young women, while disengaged, do not have proper under-clothing, or whether they contemplate marriage as an awful gulf which swallows up all future possibilities of replenishing a wardrobe,—certain it is that no sooner is a girl engaged to be married than there is a blind and distracting rush and pressure and haste to make up for her immediately a stock of articles, which, up to that hour, she has managed to live very comfortably and respectably without. It is astonishing to behold the number of inexpressible things with French names which unmarried young ladies never think of wanting, but which there is a desperate push to supply, and have ranged in order, the moment the matrimonial state is in contemplation.

Therefore it was that the virgin bower of Lillie was knee-deep in a tangled mass of stuffs of various hues and description; that the sharp sound of tearing off breadths resounded there; that Miss Clippins and Miss Snippings and Miss Nippins were sewing there day and night; that a sewing-machine was busily rattling in mamma's room; and that there were all sorts of pinking and quilling, and braiding and hemming, and whipping and ruffling, and over-sewing and cat-stitching and hem-stitching, and other female mysteries, going on.

As for Lillie, she lay in a loose *negligé* on the bed, ready every five minutes to be called up to have something measured, or tried on, or fitted; and to be consulted whether there should be fifteen or sixteen tucks and then an insertion, or sixteen tucks and a series of puffs. Her labors wore upon her; and it was smilingly observed by Miss Clippins across to Miss Nippins, that Miss Lillie was beginning to show her "engagement bones." In the midst of these preoccupations, a letter was handed to her by the giggling chambermaid. It was a thick letter, directed in a bold honest hand. Miss Lillie took it with a languid little yawn, finished the last sentences in a chapter of the novel she was reading, and then leisurely broke the seal and glanced it over. It was the one that the enraptured John had spent his morning in writing.

"Miss Ellis, now, if you'll try on this jacket—oh! I beg your pardon," said Miss Clippins, observing the letter, "we can wait, *of course*;" and then all three laughed as if something very pleasant was in their minds.

"No," said Lillie, giving the letter a toss; "it'll *keep*;" and she stood up to have a jaunty little blue jacket, with its pluffy bordering of swan's down, fitted upon her.

"It's too bad, now, to take you from your letter," said Miss Clippins, with a sly nod.

"I'm sure you take it philosophically," said Miss Nippins, with a giggle.

"Why shouldn't I?" said the divine Lillie. "I get one every day; and it's all the old story. I've heard it ever since I was born."

"Well, now, to be sure you have. Let's see," said Miss Clippins, "this is the seventy-fourth or seventy-fifth offer, was it?"

"Oh, you must ask mamma! she keeps the lists: I'm sure I don't trouble my head," said the little beauty; and she looked so natty and jaunty when she said it, just arching her queenly white neck, and making soft, downy dimples in her cheeks as she gave her fresh little childlike laugh; turning round

and round before the looking-glass, and issuing her orders for the fitting of the jacket with a precision and real interest which showed that there *were* things in the world which didn't become old stories, even if one had been used to them ever since one was born.

Lillie never was caught napping when the point in question was the fit of her clothes.

When released from the little blue jacket, there was a rose-colored morning-dress to be tried on, and a grave discussion as to whether the honiton lace was to be set on plain or frilled.

So important was this case, that mamma was summoned from the sewing-machine to give her opinion. Mrs. Ellis was a fat, fair, rosy matron of most undisturbed conscience and digestion, whose main business in life had always been to see to her children's clothes. She had brought up Lillie with faithful and religious zeal; that is to say, she had always ruffled her underclothes with her own hands, and darned her stockings, sick or well; and also, as before intimated, kept a list of her offers, which she was ready in confidential moments to tell off to any of her acquaintance. The question of ruffled or plain honiton was of such vital importance, that the whole four took some time in considering it in its various points of view.

"Sarah Selfridge had hers ruffled," said Lillie.

"And the effect was perfectly sweet," said Miss Clippins.

"Perhaps, Lillie, you had better have it ruffled," said mamma.

"But three rows laid on plain has such a lovely effect," said Miss Nippins.

"Perhaps, then, she had better have three rows laid on plain," said mamma.

"Or she might have one row ruffled on the edge, with three rows laid on plain, with a satin fold," said Miss Clippins. "That's the way I fixed Miss Elliott's."

"That would be a nice way," said mamma. "Perhaps, Lillie, you'd better have it so."

"Oh! come now, all of you, just hush," said Lillie. "I know just how I want it done."

The words may sound a little rude and dictatorial; but Lillie had the advantage of always looking so pretty, and saying dictatorial things in such a sweet voice, that everybody was delighted with them; and she took the matter of arranging the trimming in hand with a clearness of head which showed that it was a subject to which she had given mature consideration. Mrs. Ellis shook her fat sides with a comfortable motherly chuckle.

"Lillie always did know exactly what she wanted: she's a smart little thing."

And, when all the trying on and arranging of folds and frills and pinks and bows was over, Lillie threw herself comfortably upon the bed, to finish her letter.

Shrewd Miss Clippins detected the yawn with which she laid down the missive.

"Seems to me your letters don't meet a very warm reception," she said.

"Well! every day, and such long ones!" Lillie answered, turning over the pages. "See there," she went on, opening a drawer, "What a heap of them! I can't see, for my part, what any one can want to write a letter every day to anybody for. John is such a goose about me."

"He'll get over it after he's been married six months," said Miss Clippins, nodding her head with the air of a woman that has seen life.

"I'm sure I shan't care," said Lillie, with a toss of her pretty head. "It's *borous* any way."

Our readers may perhaps imagine, from the story thus far, that our little Lillie is by no means the person, in reality, that John supposes her to be, when he sits thinking of her with such devotion, and writing her such long, "borous" letters.

She is not. John is in love not with the actual Lillie Ellis, but with that ideal personage who looks like his mother's picture, and is the embodiment of all his mother's virtues. The feeling, as it exists in John's mind, is not only a most respectable, but in fact a truly divine one, and one that no mortal man ought to be ashamed of. The love that quickens all the nature, that makes a man twice manly, and makes him aspire to all that is high, pure, sweet, and religious,—is a feeling so sacred, that no unworthiness in its object can make it any less beautiful. More often than not it is spent on an utter vacancy. Men and women both pass through this divine initiation,—this sacred inspiration of

our nature,—and find, when they have come into the innermost shrine, where the divinity ought to be, that there is no god or goddess there; nothing but the cold black ashes of commonplace vulgarity and selfishness. Both of them, when the grand discovery has been made, do well to fold their robes decently about them, and make the best of the matter. If they cannot love, they can at least be friendly. They can tolerate, as philosophers; pity, as Christians; and, finding just where and how the burden of an ill-assorted union galls the least, can then and there strap it on their backs, and walk on, not only without complaint, but sometimes in a cheerful and hilarious spirit.

Not a word of all this thinks our friend John, as he sits longing, aspiring, and pouring out his heart, day after day, in letters that interrupt Lillie in the all-important responsibility of getting her wardrobe fitted.

Shall we think this smooth little fair-skinned Lillie is a cold-hearted monster, because her heart does not beat faster at these letters which she does not understand, and which strike her as unnecessarily prolix and prosy? Why should John insist on telling her his feelings and opinions on a vast variety of subjects that she does not care a button for? She doesn't know any thing about ritualism and anti-ritualism; and, what's more, she doesn't care. She hates to hear so much about religion. She thinks it's pokey. John may go to any church he pleases, for all her. As to all that about his favorite poems, she don't like poetry,—never could,—don't see any sense in it; and John *will* be quoting ever so much in his letters. Then, as to the love parts,—it may be all quite new and exciting to John; but she has, as she said, heard that story over and over again, till it strikes her as quite a matter of course. Without doubt the whole world is a desert where she is not: the thing has been asserted, over and over, by so many gentlemen of credible character for truth and veracity, that she is forced to believe it; and she cannot see why John is particularly to be pitied on this account. He is in no more desperate state about her than the rest of them; and secretly Lillie has as little pity for lovers' pangs as a nice little white cat has for mice. They amuse her; they are her appropriate recreation; and she pats and plays with each mouse in succession, without any comprehension that it may be a serious thing for him.

When Lillie was a little girl, eight years old, she used to sell her kisses through the slats of the fence for papers of candy, and thus early acquired the idea that her charms were a capital to be employed in trading for the good things of life. She had the misfortune—and a great one it is—to have been singularly beautiful from the cradle, and so was praised and exclaimed over and caressed as she walked through the streets. She was sent for, far and near; borrowed to be looked at; her picture taken by photographers. If one reflects how many foolish and inconsiderate people there are in the world, who have no scruple in making a pet and plaything of a pretty child, one will see how this one unlucky lot of being beautiful in childhood spoiled Lillie's chances of an average share of good sense and goodness. The only hope for such a case lies in the chance of possessing judicious parents. Lillie had not these. Her father was a shrewd grocer, and nothing more; and her mother was a competent cook and seamstress. While he traded in sugar and salt, and she made pickles and embroidered under-linen, the pretty Lillie was educated as pleased Heaven.

Pretty girls, unless they have wise mothers, are more educated by the opposite sex than by their own. Put them where you will, there is always some *man* busying himself in their instruction; and the burden of masculine teaching is generally about the same, and might be stereotyped as follows: "You don't need to be or do any thing. Your business in life is to look pretty, and amuse us. You don't need to study: you know all by nature that a woman need to know. You are, by virtue of being a pretty woman, superior to any thing we can teach you; and we wouldn't, for the world, have you any thing but what you are." When Lillie went to school, this was what her masters whispered in her ear as they did her sums for her, and helped her through her lessons and exercises, and looked into her eyes. This was what her young gentlemen friends, themselves delving in Latin and Greek and mathematics, told her, when they came to recreate from their severer studies in her smile. Men are held to account for talking sense. Pretty women are told that lively nonsense is their best sense. Now and then, an admirer bolder than the rest ventured to take Lillie's education more earnestly in hand,

and recommended to her just a little reading,—enough to enable her to carry on conversation, and appear to know something of the ordinary topics discussed in society,—but informed her, by the by, that there was no sort of need of being either profound or accurate in these matters, as the mistakes of a pretty woman had a grace of their own.

At seventeen, Lillie graduated from Dr. Sibthorpe's school with a "finished education." She had, somehow or other, picked her way through various "ologies" and exercises supposed to be necessary for a well-informed young lady. She wrote a pretty hand, spoke French with a good accent, and could turn a sentimental note neatly; "and that, my dear," said Dr. Sibthorpe to his wife, "is all that a woman needs, who so evidently is intended for wife and mother as our little Lillie." Dr. Sibthorpe, in fact, had amused himself with a semi-paternal flirtation with his pupil during the whole course of her school exercises, and parted from her with tears in his eyes, greatly to her amusement; for Lillie, after all, estimated his devotion at just about what it was worth. It amused her to see him make a fool of himself.

Of course, the next thing was—to be married; and Lillie's life now became a round of dressing, dancing, going to watering-places, travelling, and in other ways seeking the fulfilment of her destiny.

She had precisely the accessible, easy softness of manner that leads every man to believe that he may prove a favorite, and her run of offers became quite a source of amusement. Her arrival at watering-places was noted in initials in the papers; her dress on every public occasion was described; and, as acknowledged queen of love and beauty, she had everywhere her little court of men and women flatterers. The women flatterers around a belle are as much a part of the *cortège* as the men. They repeat the compliments they hear, and burn incense in the virgin's bower at hours when the profaner sex may not enter.

The life of a petted creature consists essentially in being deferred to, for being pretty and useless. A petted child runs a great risk, if it is ever to outgrow childhood; but a pet woman is a perpetual child. The pet woman of society is everybody's toy. Everybody looks at her, admires her, praises and flatters her, stirs her up to play off her little airs and graces for their entertainment; and passes on. Men of profound sense encourage her to chatter nonsense for their amusement, just as we delight in the tottering steps and stammering mispronunciations of a golden-haired child. When Lillie has been in Washington, she has had judges of the supreme court and secretaries of state delighted to have her give her opinions in their respective departments. Scholars and literary men flocked around her, to the neglect of many a more instructed woman, satisfied that she knew enough to blunder agreeably on every subject.

Nor is there any thing in the Christian civilization of our present century that condemns the kind of life we are describing, as in any respect unwomanly or unbecoming. Something very like it is in a measure considered as the appointed rule of attractive young girls till they are married.

Lillie had numbered among her admirers many lights of the Church. She had flirted with bishops, priests, and deacons,—who, none of them, would, for the world, have been so ungallant as to quote to her such dreadful professional passages as, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth."

In fact, the clergy, when off duty, are no safer guides of attractive young women than other mortal men; and Lillie had so often seen their spiritual attentions degenerate into downright, temporal love-making, that she held them in as small reverence as the rest of their sex. Only one dreadful John the Baptist of her acquaintance, one of the camel's-hair-girdle and locust-and-wild-honey species, once encountering Lillie at Saratoga, and observing the ways and manners of the court which she kept there, took it upon him to give her a spiritual admonition.

"Miss Lillie," he said, "I see no chance for the salvation of your soul, unless it should please God to send the small-pox upon you. I think I shall pray for that."

"Oh, horrors! don't! I'd rather never be saved," Lillie answered with a fervent sincerity.

The story was repeated afterwards as an amusing *bon mot*, and a specimen of the barbarity to which religious fanaticism may lead; and yet we question whether John the Baptist had not the right of it.

For it must at once appear, that, had the small-pox made the above-mentioned change in Lillie's complexion at sixteen, the entire course of her life would have taken another turn. The whole world then would have united in letting her know that she must live to some useful purpose, or be nobody and nothing. Schoolmasters would have scolded her if she idled over her lessons; and her breaking down in arithmetic, and mistakes in history, would no longer have been regarded as interesting. Clergymen, consulted on her spiritual state, would have told her freely that she was a miserable sinner, who, except she repented, must likewise perish. In short, all those bitter and wholesome truths, which strengthen and invigorate the virtues of plain people, might possibly have led her a long way on towards saintship.

As it was, little Lillie was confessedly no saint; and yet, if much of a sinner, society has as much to answer for as she. She was the daughter and flower of the Christian civilization of the nineteenth century, and the kind of woman, that, on the whole, men of quite distinguished sense have been fond of choosing for wives, and will go on seeking to the end of the chapter.

Did she love John? Well, she was quite pleased to be loved by him, and she liked the prospect of being his wife. She was sure he would always let her have her own way, and that he had a plenty of worldly means to do it with.

Lillie, if not very clever in a literary or scientific point of view, was no fool. She had, in fact, under all her softness of manner, a great deal of that real hard grit which shrewd, worldly people call common sense. She saw through all the illusions of fancy and feeling, right to the tough material core of things. However soft and tender and sentimental her habits of speech and action were in her professional capacity of a charming woman, still the fair Lillie, had she been a man, would have been respected in the business world, as one that had cut her eye-teeth, and knew on which side her bread was buttered.

A husband, she knew very well, was the man who undertook to be responsible for his wife's bills: he was the giver, bringer, and maintainer of all sorts of solid and appreciable comforts.

Lillie's bills had hitherto been sore places in the domestic history of her family. The career of a fashionable belle is not to be supported without something of an outlay; and that innocence of arithmetical combinations, over which she was wont to laugh bewitchingly among her adorers, sometimes led to results quite astounding to the prosaic, hard-working papa, who stood financially responsible for all her finery.

Mamma had often been called in to calm the tumult of his feelings on such semi-annual developments; and she did it by pointing out to him that this heavy present expense was an investment by which Lillie was, in the end, to make her own fortune and that of her family.

When Lillie contemplated the marriage-service with a view to going through it with John, there was one clause that stood out in consoling distinctness,—“*With all my worldly goods I thee endow.*”

As to the other clause, which contains the dreadful word “obey,” about which our modern women have such fearful apprehensions, Lillie was ready to swallow it without even a grimace.

“Obey John!” Her face wore a pretty air of droll assurance at the thought. It was too funny.

“My dear,” said Belle Trevors, who was one of Lillie's incense-burners and a bridesmaid elect, “*have* you the least idea how rich he is?”

“He is well enough off to do about any thing I want,” said Lillie.

“Well, you know he owns the whole village of Spindlewood, with all those great factories, besides law business,” said Belle. “But then they live in a dreadfully slow, pokey way down there in Springdale. They haven't the remotest idea how to use money.”

“I can show him how to use it,” said Lillie.

“He and his sister keep a nice sort of old-fashioned place there, and jog about in an old countrified carriage, picking up poor children and visiting schools. She is a *very* superior woman, that sister.”

“I don’t like superior women,” said Lillie.

“But you must like her, you know. John is perfectly devoted to her, and I suppose she is to be a fixture in the establishment.”

“We shall see about that,” said Lillie. “One thing at a time. I don’t mean he shall live at Springdale. It’s horridly pokey to live in those little country towns. He must have a house in New York.”

“And a place at Newport for the summer,” said Belle Trevors.

“Yes,” said Lillie, “a cottage in Newport does very well in the season; and then a country place well fitted up to invite company to in the other months of summer.”

“Delightful,” said Belle, “*if* you can make him do it.”

“See if I don’t,” said Lillie.

“You dear, funny creature, you,—how you do always ride on the top of the wave!” said Belle.

“It’s what I was born for,” said Lillie. “By the by, Belle, I got a letter from Harry last night.”

“Poor fellow, had he heard”—

“Why, of course not. I didn’t want he should till it’s all over. It’s best, you know.”

“He is such a good fellow, and so devoted,—it does seem a pity.”

“Devoted! well, I should rather think he was,” said Lillie. “I believe he would cut off his right hand for me, any day. But I never gave him any encouragement. I’ve always told him I could be to him only as a sister, you know.”

“You ought not to write to him,” said Belle.

“What can I do? He is perfectly desperate if I don’t, and still persists that he means to marry me some day, spite of my screams.”

“Well, he’ll have to stop making love to you after you’re married.”

“Oh, pshaw! I don’t believe that old-fashioned talk. Lovers make a variety in life. I don’t see why a married woman is to give up all the fun of having admirers. Of course, one isn’t going to do any thing wrong, you know; but one doesn’t want to settle down into Darby and Joan at once. Why, some of the young married women, the most stunning belles at Newport last year, got a great deal more attention after they were married than they did before. You see the fellows like it, because they are so sure not to be drawn in.”

“I think it’s too bad on us girls, though,” said Belle. “You ought to leave us our turn.”

“Oh! I’ll turn over any of them to you, Belle,” said Lillie. “There’s Harry, to begin with. What do you say to him?”

“Thank you, I don’t think I shall take up with second-hand articles,” said Belle, with some spirit.

But here the entrance of the chamber-maid, with a fresh dress from the dressmaker’s, resolved the conversation into a discussion so very minute and technical that it cannot be recorded in our pages.

CHAPTER V

WEDDING, AND WEDDING-TRIP

WELL, and so they were married, with all the newest modern forms, ceremonies, and accessories.

Every possible thing was done to reflect lustre on the occasion. There were eight bridesmaids, and every one of them fair as the moon; and eight groomsmen, with white-satin ribbons and white rosebuds in their button-holes; and there was a bishop, assisted by a priest, to give the solemn benedictions of the church; and there was a marriage-bell of tuberoses and lilies, of enormous size, swinging over the heads of the pair at the altar; and there were voluntaries on the organ, and chantings, and what not, all solemn and impressive as possible. In the midst of all this, the fair Lillie promised, “forsaking all others, to keep only unto him, so long as they both should live,”—“to love, honor, and obey, until death did them part.”

During the whole agitating scene, Lillie kept up her presence of mind, and was perfectly aware of what she was about; so that a very fresh, original, and crisp style of trimming, that had been invented in Paris specially for her wedding toilet, received no detriment from the least unguarded movement. We much regret that it is contrary to our literary principles to write half, or one third, in French; because the wedding-dress, by far the most important object on this occasion, and certainly one that most engrossed the thoughts of the bride, was one entirely indescribable in English. Just as there is no word in the Hottentot vocabulary for “holiness,” or “purity,” so there are no words in our savage English to describe a lady’s dress; and, therefore, our fair friends must be recommended, on this point, to exercise their imagination in connection with the study of the finest French plates, and they may get some idea of Lillie in her wedding robe and train.

Then there was the wedding banquet, where everybody ate quantities of the most fashionable, indigestible horrors, with praiseworthy courage and enthusiasm; for what is to become of “*paté de fois gras*” if we don’t eat it? What is to become of us if we do is entirely a secondary question.

On the whole, there was not one jot nor tittle of the most exorbitant requirements of fashion that was not fulfilled on this occasion. The house was a crush of wilting flowers, and smelt of tuberoses enough to give one a vertigo for a month. A band of music brayed and clashed every minute of the time; and a jam of people, in elegant dresses, shrieked to each other above the din, and several of Lillie’s former admirers got tipsy in the supper-room. In short, nothing could be finer; and it was agreed, on all hands, that it was “stunning.” Accounts of it, and of all the bride’s dresses, presents, and even wardrobe, went into the daily papers; and thus was the charming Lillie Ellis made into Mrs. John Seymour.

Then followed the approved wedding journey, the programme of which had been drawn up by Lillie herself, with *carte blanche* from John, and included every place where a bride’s new toilets could be seen in the most select fashionable circles. They went to Niagara and Trenton, they went to Newport and Saratoga, to the White Mountains and Montreal; and Mrs. John Seymour was a meteor of fashionable wonder and delight at all these places. Her dresses and her diamonds, her hats and her bonnets, were all wonderful to behold. The stir and excitement that she had created as simple Miss Ellis was nothing to the stir and excitement about Mrs. John Seymour. It was the mere grub compared with the full-blown butterfly,—the bud compared with the rose. Wherever she appeared, her old admirers flocked in her train. The unmarried girls were, so to speak, nowhere. Marriage was a new lease of power and splendor, and she revelled in it like a humming-bird in the sunshine.

And was John equally happy? Well, to say the truth, John’s head was a little turned by the possession of this curious and manifold creature, that fluttered and flapped her wings about the eyes

and ears of his understanding, and appeared before him every day in some new device of the toilet, fair and fresh; smiling and bewitching, kissing and coaxing, laughing and crying, and in all ways bewildering him, the once sober-minded John, till he scarce knew whether he stood on his head or his heels. He knew that this sort of rattling, scatter-brained life must come to an end some time. He knew there was a sober, serious life-work for him; something that must try his mind and soul and strength, and that would, by and by, leave him neither time nor strength to be the mere wandering *attaché* of a gay bird, whose string he held in hand, and who now seemed to pull him hither and thither at her will.

John thought of all these things at intervals; and then, when he thought of the quiet, sober, respectable life at Springdale, of the good old staple families, with their steady ways,—of the girls in his neighborhood with their reading societies, their sewing-circles for the poor, their book-clubs and art-unions for practice in various accomplishments,—he thought, with apprehension, that there appeared not a spark of interest in his charmer's mind for any thing in this direction. She never had read any thing,—knew nothing on all those subjects about which the women and young girls in his circle were interested; while, in Springdale, there were none of the excitements which made her interested in life. He could not help perceiving that Lillie's five hundred particular friends were mostly of the other sex, and wondering whether he alone, when the matter should be reduced to that, could make up to her for all her retinue of slaves.

Like most good boys who grow into good men, John had unlimited faith in women. Whatever little defects and flaws they might have, still at heart he supposed they were all of the same substratum as his mother and sister. The moment a woman was married, he imagined that all the lovely domestic graces would spring up in her, no matter what might have been her previous disadvantages, merely because she was a woman. He had no doubt of the usual orthodox oak-and-ivy theory in relation to man and woman; and that his wife, when he got one, would be the clinging ivy that would bend her flexible tendrils in the way his strong will and wisdom directed. He had never, perhaps, seen, in southern regions, a fine tree completely smothered and killed in the embraces of a gay, flaunting parasite; and so received no warning from vegetable analogies.

Somehow or other, he was persuaded, he should gradually bring his wife to all his own ways of thinking, and all his schemes and plans and opinions. This might, he thought, be difficult, were she one of the pronounced, strong-minded sort, accustomed to thinking and judging for herself. Such a one, he could easily imagine, there might be a risk in encountering in the close intimacy of domestic life. Even in his dealings with his sister, he was made aware of a force of character and a vigor of intellect that sometimes made the carrying of his own way over hers a matter of some difficulty. Were it not that Grace was the best of women, and her ways always the very best of ways, John was not so sure but that she might prove a little too masterful for him.

But this lovely bit of pink and white; this downy, gauzy, airy little elf; this creature, so slim and slender and unsubstantial,—surely he need have no fear that he could not mould and control and manage her? Oh, no! He imagined her melting, like a moon-beam, into all manner of sweet compliances, becoming an image and reflection of his own better self; and repeated to himself the lines of Wordsworth,—

“I saw her, on a nearer view,
A spirit, yet a woman too,—
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty.
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food,
For transient pleasures, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.”

John fancied he saw his little Lillie subdued into a pattern wife, weaned from fashionable follies, eagerly seeking mental improvement under his guidance, and joining him and Grace in all sorts of edifying works and ways.

The reader may see, from the conversations we have detailed, that nothing was farther from Lillie's intentions than any such conformity.

The intentions of the married pair, in fact, ran exactly contrary to one another. John meant to bring Lillie to a sober, rational, useful family life; and Lillie meant to run a career of fashionable display, and make John pay for it.

Neither, at present, stated their purposes precisely to the other, because they were "honey-mooning." John, as yet, was the enraptured lover; and Lillie was his pink and white sultana,—his absolute mistress, her word was law, and his will was hers. How the case was ever to be reversed, so as to suit the terms of the marriage service, John did not precisely inquire.

But, when husband and wife start in life with exactly opposing intentions, which, think you, is likely to conquer,—the man, or the woman? That is a very nice question, and deserves further consideration.

CHAPTER VI

HONEY-MOON, AND AFTER

WE left Mr. and Mrs. John Seymour honey-mooning. The honey-moon, dear ladies, is supposed to be the period of male subjection. The young queen is enthroned; and the first of her slaves walks obediently in her train, carries her fan, her parasol, runs of her errands, packs her trunk, writes her letters, buys her any thing she cries for, and is ready to do the impossible for her, on every suitable occasion.

A great strong man sometimes feels awkwardly, when thus led captive; but the greatest, strongest, and most boastful, often go most obediently under woman-rule; for which, see Shakspeare, concerning Cleopatra and Julius Cæsar and Mark Antony.

But then all kingdoms, and all sway, and all authority must come to an end. Nothing lasts, you see. The plain prose of life must have its turn, after the poetry and honey-moons—stretch them out to their utmost limit—have their terminus.

So, at the end of six weeks, John and Lillie, somewhat dusty and travel-worn, were received by Grace into the old family-mansion at Springdale.

Grace had read her Bible and Fénelon to such purpose, that she had accepted her cross with open arms.

Dear reader, Grace was not a severe, angular, old-maid sister, ready to snarl at the advent of a young beauty; but an elegant and accomplished woman, with a wide culture, a trained and disciplined mind, a charming taste, and polished manners; and, above all, a thorough self-understanding and discipline. Though past thirty, she still had admirers and lovers; yet, till now, her brother, insensibly to herself, had blocked up the doorway of her heart; and the perfectness of the fraternal friendship had prevented the wish and the longing by which some fortunate man might have found and given happiness.

Grace had resolved she would love her new sister; that she would look upon all her past faults and errors with eyes of indulgence; that she would put out of her head every story she ever had heard against her, and unite with her brother to make her lot a happy one.

“John is so good a man,” she said to Miss Letitia Ferguson, “that I am sure Lillie cannot but become a good woman.”

So Grace adorned the wedding with her presence, in an elegant Parisian dress, ordered for the occasion, and presented the young bride with a set of pearl and amethyst that were perfectly bewitching, and kisses and notes of affection had been exchanged between them; and during various intervals, and for weeks past, Grace had been pleasantly employed in preparing the family-mansion to receive the new mistress.

John's bachelor apartments had been new furnished, and furbished, and made into a perfect bower of roses.

The rest of the house, after the usual household process of purification, had been rearranged, as John and his sister had always kept it since their mother's death in the way that she loved to see it. There was something quaint and sweet and antique about it, that suited Grace. Its unfashionable difference from the smart, flippant, stereotyped rooms of to-day had a charm in her eyes.

Lillie, however, surveyed the scene, the first night that she took possession, with a quiet determination to re-modernize on the very earliest opportunity. What would Mrs. Frippit and Mrs. Nippit say to such rooms, she thought. But then there was time enough to attend to that. Not a shade of these internal reflections was visible in her manner. She said, “Oh, how sweet! How perfectly charming! How splendid!” in all proper places; and John was delighted.

She also fell into the arms of Grace, and kissed her with effusion; and John saw the sisterly union, which he had anticipated, auspiciously commencing.

The only trouble in Grace's mind was from a terrible sort of clairvoyance that seems to beset very sincere people, and makes them sensitive to the presence of any thing unreal or untrue. Fair and soft and caressing as the new sister was, and determined as Grace was to believe in her, and trust her, and like her,—she found an invisible, chilly barrier between her heart and Lillie. She scolded herself, and, in the effort to confide, became unnaturally demonstrative, and said and did more than was her wont to show affection; and yet, to her own mortification, she found herself, after all, seeming to herself to be hypocritical, and professing more than she felt.

As to the fair Lillie, who, as we have remarked, was no fool, she took the measure of her new sister with that instinctive knowledge of character which is the essence of womanhood. Lillie was not in love with John, because that was an experience she was not capable of. But she had married him, and now considered him as her property, her subject,—*hers*, with an intensity of ownership that should shut out all former proprietors.

We have heard much talk, of late, concerning the husband's ownership of the wife. But, dear ladies, is that any more pronounced a fact than every wife's ownership of her husband?—an ownership so intense and pervading that it may be said to be the controlling nerve of womanhood. Let any one touch your right to the first place in your husband's regard, and see!

Well, then, Lillie saw at a glance just what Grace was, and what her influence with her brother must be; and also that, in order to live the life she meditated, John must act under her sway, and not under his sister's; and so the resolve had gone forth, in her mind, that Grace's dominion in the family should come to an end, and that she would, as sole empress, reconstruct the state. But, of course, she was too wise to say a word about it.

“Dear me!” she said, the next morning, when Grace proposed showing her through the house and delivering up the keys, “I'm sure I don't see why you want to show things to me. I'm nothing of a housekeeper, you know: all I know is what I want, and I've always had what I wanted, you know; but, you see, I haven't the least idea how it's to be done. Why, at home I've been everybody's baby. Mamma laughs at the idea of my knowing any thing. So, Grace dear, you must just be prime minister; and I'll be the good-for-nothing Queen, and just sign the papers, and all that, you know.”

Grace found, the first week, that to be housekeeper to a young duchess, in an American village and with American servants, was no sinecure.

The young mistress, the next week, tumbled into the wash an amount of muslin and lace and French puffing and fluting sufficient to employ two artists for two or three days, and by which honest Bridget, as she stood at her family wash-tub, was sorely perplexed.

But, in America, no woman ever dies for want of speaking her mind; and the lower orders have their turn in teaching the catechism to their superiors, which they do with an effectiveness that does credit to democracy.

“And would ye be plased to step here, Miss Saymour,” said Bridget to Grace, in a voice of suppressed emotion, and pointing oratorically, with her soapy right arm, to a snow-wreath of French finery and puffing on the floor. “What I asks, Miss Grace, is, *Who* is to do all this? I'm sure it would take me and Katy a week, workin' day and night, let alone the cookin' and the silver and the beds, and all them. It's a pity, now, somebody shouldn't spake to that young crather; fur she's nothin' but a baby, and likely don't know any thing, as ladies mostly don't, about what's right and proper.” Bridget's Christian charity and condescension in this last sentence was some mitigation of the crisis; but still Grace was appalled. We all of us, my dear sisters, have stood appalled at the tribunal of good Bridgets rising in their majesty and declaring their ultimatum.

Bridget was a treasure in the town of Springdale, where servants were scarce and poor; and, what was more, she was a treasure that knew her own worth. Grace knew very well how she had been beset with applications and offers of higher wages to draw her to various hotels and boarding-houses

in the vicinity, but had preferred the comparative dignity and tranquillity of a private gentleman's family.

But the family had been small, orderly, and systematic, and Grace the most considerate of housekeepers. Still it was not to be denied, that, though an indulgent and considerate mistress, Bridget was, in fact, mistress of the Seymour mansion, and that her mind and will concerning the washing must be made known to the young queen.

It was a sore trial to speak to Lillie; but it would be sorer to be left at once desolate in the kitchen department, and exposed to the marauding inroads of unskilled Hibernians.

In the most delicate way, Grace made Lillie acquainted with the domestic crisis; as, in old times, a prime minister might have carried to one of the Charleses the remonstrance and protest of the House of Commons.

"Oh! I'm sure I don't know how it's to be done," said Lillie, gayly. "Mamma always got my things done *somehow*. They always *were* done, and always must be: you just tell her so. I think it's always best to be decided with servants. Face 'em down in the beginning."

"But you see, Lillie dear, it's almost impossible to *get* servants at all in Springdale; and such servants as ours everybody says are an exception. If we talk to Bridget in that way, she'll just go off and leave us; and then what shall we do?"

"What in the world does John want to live in such a place for?" said Lillie, peevishly. "There are plenty of servants to be got in New York; and that's the only place fit to live in. Well, it's no affair of mine! Tell John he married me, and must take care of me. He must settle it some way: I shan't trouble my head about it."

The idea of living in New York, and uprooting the old time-honored establishment in Springdale, struck Grace as a sort of sacrilege; yet she could not help feeling, with a kind of fear, that the young mistress had power to do it.

"Don't, darling, talk so, for pity's sake," she said. "I will go to John, and we will arrange it somehow."

A long consultation with faithful John, in the evening, revealed to him the perplexing nature of the material processes necessary to get up his fair puff of thistledown in all that wonderful whiteness and fancifulness of costume which had so entranced him.

Lillie cried, and said she never had any trouble before about "getting her things done." She was sure mamma or Trixie or somebody did them, or got them done,—she never knew how or when. With many tears and sobs, she protested her ardent desire to realize the Scriptural idea of the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field, which were fed and clothed, "like Solomon in all his glory," without ever giving a moment's care to the matter.

John kissed and embraced, and wiped away her tears, and declared she should have every thing just as she desired it, if it took the half of his kingdom.

After consoling his fair one, he burst into Grace's room in the evening, just at the hour when they used to have their old brotherly and sisterly confidential talks.

"You see, Grace,—poor Lillie, dear little thing,—you don't know how distressed she is; and, Grace, we must find somebody to do up all her fol-de-rols and fizzes for her, you know. You see, she's been *used* to this kind of thing; can't do without it."

"Well, I'll try to-morrow, John," said Grace, patiently. "There is Mrs. Atkins,—she is a very nice woman."

"Oh, exactly! just the thing," said John. "Yes, we'll get her to take all Lillie's things every week. That settles it."

"Do you know, John, at the prices that Mrs. Atkins asks, you will have to pay more than for all your family service together? What we have this week would be twenty dollars, at the least computation; and it is worth it too,—the work of getting up is so elaborate."

John opened his eyes, and looked grave. Like all stable New-England families, the Seymours, while they practised the broadest liberality, had instincts of great sobriety in expense. Needless profusion shocked them as out of taste; and a quiet and decent reticence in matters of self-indulgence was habitual with them.

Such a price for the fine linen of his little angel rather staggered him; but he gulped it down.

“Well, well, Gracie,” he said, “cost what it may, she must have it as she likes it. The little creature, you see, has never been accustomed to calculate or reflect in these matters; and it is trial enough to come down to our stupid way of living,—so different, you know, from the gay life she has been leading.”

Miss Seymour’s saintship was somewhat rudely tested by this remark. That anybody should think it a sacrifice to be John’s wife, and a trial to accept the homestead at Springdale, with all its tranquillity and comforts,—that John, under her influence, should speak of the Springdale life as *stupid*,—was a little drop too much in her cup. A bright streak appeared in either cheek, as she said,—

“Well, John, I never knew you found Springdale stupid before. I’m sure, we *have* been happy here,”—and her voice quavered.

“Pshaw, Gracie! you know what I mean. I don’t mean that *I* find it stupid. I don’t like the kind of rattle-brained life we’ve been leading this six weeks. But, then, it just suits Lillie; and it’s so sweet and patient of her to come here and give it all up, and say not a word of regret; and then, you see, I shall be just up to my ears in business now, and can’t give up all my time to her, as I have. There’s ever so much law business coming on, and all the factory matters at Spindlewood; and I can see that Lillie will have rather a hard time of it. You must devote yourself to her, Gracie, like a dear, good soul, as you always were, and try to get her interested in our kind of life. Of course, all our set will call, and that will be something; and then—there will be some invitations out.”

“Oh, yes, John! we’ll manage it,” said Grace, who had by this time swallowed her anger, and shouldered her cross once more with a womanly perseverance. “Oh, yes! the Fergusons, and the Wilcoxes, and the Lennoxes, will all call; and we shall have picnics, and lawn teas, and musicals, and parties.”

“Yes, yes, I see,” said John. “Gracie, *isn’t* she a dear little thing? Didn’t she look cunning in that white wrapper this morning? How do women do those things, I wonder?” said John. “Don’t you think her manners are lovely?”

“They are very sweet, and she is charmingly pretty,” said Grace; “and I love her dearly.”

“And so affectionate! Don’t you think so?” continued John. “She’s a person that you can do any thing with through her heart. She’s all heart, and very little head. I ought not to say that, either. I think she has fair natural abilities, had they ever been cultivated.”

“My dear John,” said Grace, “you forget what time it is. Good-night!”

CHAPTER VII

WILL SHE LIKE IT?

“JOHN,” said Grace, “when are you going out again to our Sunday school at Spindlewood? They are all asking after you. Do you know it is now two months since they have seen you?”

“I know it,” said John. “I am going to-morrow. You see, Gracie, I couldn’t well before.”

“Oh! I have told them all about it, and I have kept things up; but then there are so many who want to see *you*, and so many things that you alone could settle and manage.”

“Oh, yes! I’ll go to-morrow,” said John. “And, after this, I shall be steady at it. I wonder if we could get Lillie to go,” said he, doubtfully.

Grace did not answer. Lillie was a subject on which it was always embarrassing to her to be appealed to. She was so afraid of appearing jealous or unappreciative; and her opinions were so different from those of her brother, that it was rather difficult to say any thing.

“Do you think she would like it, Grace?”

“Indeed, John, you must know better than I. If anybody could make her take an interest in it, it would be you.”

Before his marriage, John had always had the idea that pretty, affectionate little women were religious and self-denying at heart, as matters of course. No matter through what labyrinths of fashionable follies and dissipation they had been wandering, still a talent for saintship was lying dormant in their natures, which it needed only the touch of love to develop. The wings of the angel were always concealed under the fashionable attire of the belle, and would unfold themselves when the hour came. A nearer acquaintance with Lillie, he was forced to confess, had not, so far, confirmed this idea. Though hers was a face so fair and pure that, when he first knew her, it suggested ideas of prayer, and communion with angels, yet he could not disguise from himself that, in all near acquaintance with her, she had proved to be most remarkably “of the earth, earthy.” She was alive and fervent about fashionable gossip,—of who is who, and what does what; she was alive to equipages, to dress, to sightseeing, to dancing, to any thing of which the whole stimulus and excitement was earthly and physical. At times, too, he remembered that she had talked a sort of pensive sentimentalism, of a slightly religious nature; but the least idea of a moral purpose in life—of self-denial, and devotion to something higher than immediate self-gratification—seemed never to have entered her head. What is more, John had found his attempts to introduce such topics with her always unsuccessful. Lillie either gaped in his face, and asked him what time it was; or playfully pulled his whiskers, and asked him why he didn’t take to the ministry; or adroitly turned the conversation with kissing and compliments.

Sunday morning came, shining down gloriously through the dewy elm-arches of Springdale. The green turf on either side of the wide streets was mottled and flecked with vivid flashes and glimmers of emerald, like the sheen of a changeable silk, as here and there long arrows of sunlight darted down through the leaves and touched the ground.

The gardens between the great shady houses that flanked the street were full of tall white and crimson phloxes in all the majesty of their summer bloom, and the air was filled with fragrance; and Lillie, after a two hours’ toilet, came forth from her chamber fresh and lovely as the bride in the Canticles. “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.” She was killingly dressed in the rural-simplicity style. All her robes and sashes were of purest white; and a knot of field-daisies and grasses, with French dew-drops on them, twinkled in an infinitesimal bonnet on her little head, and her hair was all *créped* into a filmy golden aureole round her face. In short, dear reader, she was a perfectly got-up angel, and wanted only some tulle clouds and an opening heaven to have gone up at once, as similar angels do from the Parisian stage.

“You like me, don’t you?” she said, as she saw the delight in John’s eyes.

John was tempted to lay hold of his plaything.

“Don’t, now,—you’ll crumple me,” she said, fighting him off with a dainty parasol. “Positively you shan’t touch me till after church.”

John laid the little white hand on his arm with pride, and looked down at her over his shoulder all the way to church. He felt proud of her. They would look at her, and see how pretty she was, he thought. And so they did. Lillie had been used to admiration in church. It was one of her fields of triumph. She had received compliments on her toilet even from young clergymen, who, in the course of their preaching and praying, found leisure to observe the beauties of nature and grace in their congregation. She had been quite used to knowing of young men who got good seats in church simply for the purpose of seeing her; consequently, going to church had not the moral advantages for her that it has for people who go simply to pray and be instructed. John saw the turning of heads, and the little movements and whispers of admiration; and his heart was glad within him. The thought of her mingled with prayer and hymn; even when he closed his eyes, and bowed his head, she was there.

Perhaps this was not exactly as it should be; yet let us hope the angels look tenderly down on the sins of too much love. John felt as if he would be glad of a chance to die for her; and, when he thought of her in his prayers, it was because he loved her better than himself.

As to Lillie, there was an extraordinary sympathy of sentiment between them at that moment. John was thinking only of her; and she was thinking only of herself, as was her usual habit,—herself, the one object of her life, the one idol of her love.

Not that she knew, in so many words, that she, the little, frail bit of dust and ashes that she was, was her own idol, and that she appeared before her Maker, in those solemn walls, to draw to herself the homage and the attention that was due to God alone; but yet it was true that, for years and years, Lillie’s unconfessed yet only motive for appearing in church had been the display of herself, and the winning of admiration.

But is she so much worse than others?—than the clergyman who uses the pulpit and the sacred office to show off his talents?—than the singers who sing God’s praises to show their voices,—who intone the agonies of their Redeemer, or the glories of the *Te Deum*, confident on the comments of the newspaper press on their performance the next week? No: Lillie may be a little sinner, but not above others in this matter.

“Lillie,” said John to her after dinner, assuming a careless, matter-of-course air, “would you like to drive with me over to Spindlewood, and see my Sunday school?”

“*Your* Sunday school, John? Why, bless me! do *you* teach Sunday school?”

“Certainly I do. Grace and I have a school of two hundred children and young people belonging to our factories. I am superintendent.”

“I never did hear of any thing so odd!” said Lillie. “What in the world can you want to take all that trouble for,—go basking over there in the hot sun, and be shut up with a room full of those ill-smelling factory-people? Why, I’m sure it can’t be your duty! I wouldn’t do it for the world. Nothing would tempt me. Why, gracious, John, you might catch small-pox or something!”

“Pooh! Lillie, child, you don’t know any thing about them. They are just as cleanly and respectable as anybody.”

“Oh, well! they may be. But these Irish and Germans and Swedes and Danes, and all that low class, do smell so,—you needn’t tell me, now!—that working-class smell is a thing that can’t be disguised.”

“But, Lillie, these are our people. They are the laborers from whose toils our wealth comes; and we owe them something.”

“Well! you pay them something, don’t you?”

“I mean morally. We owe our efforts to instruct their children, and to elevate and guide them. Lillie, I feel that it is wrong for us to use wealth merely as a means of self-gratification. We ought

to labor for those who labor for us. We ought to deny ourselves, and make some sacrifices of ease for their good.”

“You dear old preachy creature!” said Lillie. “How good you must be! But, really, I haven’t the smallest vocation to be a missionary,—not the smallest. I can’t think of any thing that would induce me to take a long, hot ride in the sun, and to sit in that stived-up room with those common creatures.”

John looked grave. “Lillie,” he said, “you shouldn’t speak of any of your fellow-beings in that heartless way.”

“Well now, if you are going to scold me, I’m sure I don’t want to go. I’m sure, if everybody that stays at home, and has comfortable times, Sundays, instead of going out on missions, is heartless, there are a good many heartless people in the world.”

“I beg your pardon, my darling. I didn’t mean, dear, that *you* were heartless, but that what you said *sounded* so. I knew you didn’t really mean it. I didn’t ask you, dear, to go to *work*,—only to be company for me.”

“And I ask you to stay at home, and be company for *me*. I’m sure it is lonesome enough here, and you are off on business almost all your days; and you might stay with me Sundays. You could hire some poor, pious young man to do all the work over there. There are plenty of them, dear knows, that it would be a real charity to help, and that could preach and pray better than you can, I know. I don’t think a man that is busy all the week ought to work Sundays. It is breaking the Sabbath.”

“But, Lillie, I am *interested* in my Sunday school. I know all my people, and they know me; and no one else in the world could do for them what I could.”

“Well, I should think you might be interested in *me*: nobody else can do for me what you can, and I want you to stay with me. That’s just the way with you men: you don’t care any thing about us after you get us.”

“Now, Lillie, darling, you know that isn’t so.”

“It’s just so. You care more for your old missionary work, now, than you do for me. I’m sure I never knew that I’d married a home-missionary.”

“Darling, please, now, don’t laugh at me, and try to make me selfish and worldly. You have such power over me, you ought to be my inspiration.”

“I’ll be your common-sense, John. When you get on stilts, and run benevolence into the ground, I’ll pull you down. Now, I know it must be bad for a man, that has as much as you do to occupy his mind all the week, to go out and work Sundays; and it’s foolish, when you could perfectly well hire somebody else to do it, and stay at home, and have a good time.”

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