THE ROMANCE OF A SUMMER.

CHAPTER II.

That same evening, as aunt and niece were seated in the little room which served as dining-room and drawing-room both, they saw the well-known figure of the village postman stopping before their little gate.

"Run, Avice, dear, and see what letters old David has for us," said Miss Marchmont, looking round at her niece. "We ought to have one from grandmamma to-day, it is so long since she has written."

Avice needed no second bidding, and in another moment she was standing by the old postman's side. "Now, David," she said coaxingly, "where are those letters you promised me yesterday? I'm getting fearfully impatient for them."

David shook his head. "I'm fearing there's naething for ye the nicht, missie," he replied, as he held open his scantily-filled bag for her inspection. "But here's twa for the auld leddy yonder," nodding his head in the direction of the window as he spoke, and at the same time producing two square-looking packets from the bottom of his bag. "Maybe there's some bit letter inside for you."

Avice shook her head doubtfully; there was not much likelihood of that, she thought, as she returned to the sitting-room with them. "Two for you, auntie," she said, as she handed them to her. "One's from grandmamma, and the other's an Indian letter—from papa, I expect; it's like his writing."

If she had wanted to know the contents of the last-named letter, she was doomed to disappointment, for Miss Marchmont, after glancing at the superscription, placed it in her pocket and turned her attention to the other one. Her brother-in-law's scrawls were not easy to read, and she preferred deciphering them by herself.

Presently, however, Avice, seeing the Standishes at the gate, went off to join them in their walk; and then pulling the Indian letter out of its resting-place, the elder lady proceeded to peruse it. Apparently the contents did not exactly please her, for her usually placid forehead wore a decided frown as she replaced it in its envelope, and an ejaculation which, coming from other lips, might have been termed impatient, escaped her. "It's a great nuisance," she murmured, half aloud, as she gazed abstractedly out of the window—"a great nuisance. If only he had waited until rather later—until October, say, or even the end of September! But to have him coming home just now, when mother and I are both away from home, and Erica too—it is really *too* provoking. However, he'll just have to come and stay down here, if he really wants to see us on business.—Ah, well, I just wish Margaret had never met him. Poor Margaret! it would have been better for *her* at anyrate if she hadn't." And then the good soul went off into a day-dream, a sad-sweet dream of days which could never return, when her long dead sister, Avice's mother, had been a laughing joyous girl, just as her daughter was now, in the bright careless days before she had met and loved Kilmur Sacharty.

The shadows were growing long and black ere she was roused from her reverie by her niece's merry laugh. She smiled as she watched the girl's deft fingers light the little lamp, "to save Perkins the trouble;" and sighed, too, as she noted how like every gesture, every movement of the slim figure, was to that of the dead young mother.

"I have had a letter from your father," she began at last after a few minutes' pause. This was merely by way of introduction, as Avice knew that much already. "It is not very long, nor is there much in it, except the fact that he is on his way home—ahem, I should say to England, at this moment."

"Papa coming home! Why, how's that, auntie? He hasn't been abroad more than four years since he was here last. What can be bringing him home?" And Avice turned a look of inquiry upon her aunt.

"That I cannot tell you, for I do not know myself," returned that lady. "He merely says it is a matter of business, which he can settle best personally. But you know how erratic his movements are."

Avice looked puzzled, but not altogether pleased. The truth was, she also wished her father's visit had been deferred till later, for she had no mind to quit Mark's Cove before the Standishes, and she feared that this might lead to her aunt's returning home at once. So she was not a little relieved to hear Miss Marchmont declare that she had no intention of going back, and that if Kilmur wanted to see them, he could just come down to Mark's Cove.

"That's another fulfilment of my prophecy," said Avice, as she related the news to her ally Humphrey the next day—"at least, I mean a kind of fulfilment, for of course it is a very nice one, and I prophesied evil."

Humphrey didn't answer. He appeared busily engrossed in baiting one of the girl's hooks—in reality, he was doubting whether the news were really so good—at least for him, for "papa" might object to his suit, and shatter all his hopes with one cruel blow. However, it was no good meeting trouble half's way, as he told himself; so, casting all thoughts of parental opposition to the winds, he set to work to enjoy himself as heartily as if no such thing could possibly exist, and the next few days passed more swiftly than those before. Destiny, however, was bringing the much-dreaded father nearer and nearer, until at last one fine day it landed him outside the little green door of Miss Marchmont's rooms, and gave him a friendly push over the threshold.

Humphrey was out when he arrived—by himself, for a wonder—the fact being that he had gone out in a herring-boat, "just to see what it was like," as he said; and he did not return until about eight o'clock the next morning.

Mrs. Standish told him the news over his breakfast, and also added that she had been introduced to the new-comer.

"Oh! And what is he like?" inquired Humphrey, diligently buttering his bread, as if Kilmur Sacharty's appearance was no more to him than that of the sweep. "Is he good-looking?"

"Um—yes. I suppose he would be considered rather handsome. But, my dear Humphrey," in an expressive whisper, "he is black."

"Black!" almost shouted her son, springing out of his seat in astonishment. "Do you mean to say that Avice Sacharty's father is black?"

Mrs. Standish looked a little surprised. She had certainly not expected such an exhibition of feeling, although she guessed that the news would be rather startling.

"Of course, he is not like a nigger, my dear," she said mildly. "He is an Indian—but I'm not sure, as it is in Malacca he lives—a man of great influence, and of very high rank there, I believe. And he is not very black, not very much more so than Avice herself; and you know she is not particularly dark."

Humphrey frowned. However noble and powerful the father might be, the idea of a coloured father-in-law was not exactly a pleasant one, even though the tinting were light. But still, as he reflected, intermarriage with foreign potentates and nobles was not considered such a very dreadful thing nowadays. In fact, it was done, well, if not every day, at least sometimes. And then there was Avice herself, so sweet and bright and lovable, with her winsome face, which had learned to brighten at his coming, and her merry laugh, which rang in his ears like music. Surely, if she loved him, it was worth while submitting to some little disagreeables for her sake. And as he thought it all over, the recollection flashed over him of how that bright face had looked in its deathly pallor that day on the cliffs, when he all but lost her she was won; and he shuddered again at the remembrance, and felt firmly and clearly how impossible it would be for him to relinquish her, come what might.

And after all, when he was introduced to Mr. Sacharty, he found that—to look on, at all events—he was not at all so bad as he had imagined. Dark he most certainly was, but exceedingly handsome notwithstanding, with clear-cut features, a thin composed-looking mouth, and glossy hair the colour of Avice's, which waved slightly and most becomingly.

He professed himself charmed to meet his precious daughter's preserver, for as such he most assuredly regarded Humphrey, and offered no obstacle to the free unrestrained intercourse which had all along existed between the two. To be sure, he often made one of the party when Humphrey proposed any ramble or excursion for himself and Avice; but the astute young man early discovered Mr. Sacharty's objection to the motion of the sea, and accordingly increased the number of his aquatic expeditions, much to Avice's secret joy, for she loved boating beyond everything.

So far there had been no mention of the 'business,' the grave importance of which had brought him to England, and Miss Marchmont was beginning to think of making some inquiries as to its nature, when, to her relief, her brother-in-law started the subject himself. They were alone. Miss Marchmont was sitting by the open window busily engaged in embroidering a pinafore for a little niece in Ireland, when Kilmur suddenly drew up his chair opposite hers and said quietly: "Amelia, I want to have a little talk with you about the business which has brought me over here, and it seems to me that just now is a very good opportunity for doing so."

"Well," returned his sister-in-law, laying down her work, "I am glad that you have started the subject; for I was beginning to have some very serious doubts as to the existence of any business whatever."

The Indian smiled—an unpleasant smile. "Oh yes, it is very real business," he replied—"very real, I assure you. It is about Avice's marriage."

Miss Marchmont started. "Avice's marriage," she repeated, a nameless dread striking cold at her heart. "Why, she is not even engaged. What is the use of talking about marriage for a child like that?"

"Her mother was exactly the same age when she married me," replied the other, in his cold measured tones—"exactly the same age, if I remember right; besides, what has age to do with the matter?"

"She cannot choose for herself; she is too young to know her own mind," began Miss Marchmont; but her brother-in-law interrupted her.

"It is not a case of choosing for herself or of knowing her own mind," he said quietly. "It is *I*, her father, who have to choose; and I *have* chosen."

"Good gracious, Kilmur, what *do* you mean?" Miss Marchmont was not given to the use of ejaculations, but the violence of her emotions forced this one from her.

"I mean precisely what I say," was the answer. "I have exercised my parental right in choosing my daughter's husband, and he is one of the richest men in all the Malay Peninsula."

"And his name?" gasped Miss Marchmont.

"The Rajah Mutwanee," returned her brother-in-law triumphantly; "and he has promised to make her his principal wife."

"His principal wife! The principal wife—temporarily, of course—of a Malay rajah."

All Miss Marchmont's ideas of right and honour rose in arms at such a thought. Her brother-in-law must have taken leave of his senses, and she would take upon herself the duty of setting him right. Possessed of a considerable flow of language, she took him severely to task there and then, and poured out the vials of her wrath upon him. But he did not mind. He shrugged his shoulders a little, and then sat patiently waiting, a smile on his thin lips, until such time as her eloquence should be exhausted.

At last she stopped, more from want of breath than from lack of argument; and then he repeated, politely but firmly, his former declaration, that he, as the girl's father, had complete authority over her in all matters whatsoever.

Miss Marchmont was momentarily dumbfounded by his coolness. Only momentarily, however, for suddenly bending forward in her chair, the light of triumph in her eyes, she exclaimed: "Kilmur Sacharty, you have no such authority. You renounced it entirely on her mother's death.—No!" as he opened his lips as if to reply; "you need not trouble to deny the fact, for I have your formal renunciation in black and white at the lawyer's, and by that paper her grandmother and myself are appointed Avice's guardians."

An angry gleam flashed in the dark eyes of the foreigner. "The paper is not binding," he cried fiercely. "In my own land, among my own people, I can snap my fingers at your musty lawyers and their foolish decrees, fit only for the control of slow-blooded Englishmen. We in Malacca do not acknowledge such papers; we do not hold that faith should be kept with infidels."

A scornful smile curled round the corners of the spinster's lip as he said this. "You talk foolishly, Kilmur," she said, rising. "When you come to think the matter over, you will see that I am right."

Apparently, Miss Marchmont was right when she predicted that Kilmur Sacharty would think better of what he had said; for the next morning he waylaid her as she was going down to the beach and humbly apologised for his rash and foolish words. She was the more surprised at this, as she knew her brother-in-law to be a man of an intensely proud nature, and for a moment she was somewhat inclined to doubt his sincerity. However, his penitence, although somewhat theatrically expressed, seemed real enough; and after giving him a sharply-scrutinising glance, which he bore without flinching, she graciously accorded him the pardon he sought.

"Only I hope, Kilmur," she added impressively, "that you will never entertain such an outrageous idea again. Remember Avice is not in the slighest degree answerable to you, nor have you any power over her." With which warning speech she passed on down to the beach, leaving Kilmur to digest her words at his leisure. Had she seen the look of hatred which passed over her brother-in-law's face as she turned away, she might not have felt so comfortable as she did; but she was thinking of other things, and, she did not notice him.

The truth was she had remarked for some time past Humphrey's growing attachment for Avice, and her mind was occupied with the problem, did the girl return his affection, or were her feelings towards him merely those of friendship? She could not tell. Girls were queer creatures, and Avice in some things was one of the queerest. The only way in which her aunt could judge was by watching her closely when with Humphrey; and even then, as she acknowledged with a sigh, it was very hard to tell.

Matters were in this state when one morning she received a letter from her sister in Ireland begging her to come over and help her, as her youngest child was dangerously ill with scarlet fever, and the two elder ones seemed to be sickening of the same fell complaint. She had scarcely finished reading her sister's mournful epistle, written in pencil by the sick child's side, when Kilmur, who was also engaged in perusing his correspondence, glanced up.

"Can you tell me when the next train goes to London?" he inquired. "I find I must go at once to Berlin. I have some business there which requires my immediate attention, and I must go to London first."

A feeling of relief came over Miss Marchmont's heart. If Kilmur were away, she should not mind leaving Avice in Scotland, to pay a long promised visit to some friends, while she herself went to Ireland.

"There is a train about eleven o'clock," broke in Avice's voice before her aunt had time to answer. "You could catch that nicely, I should think."

Evidently her father thought so too; and by five minutes past eleven he was slowly steaming out of the Mark's Cove station, leaving Avice and her aunt to return home and make their own preparations for a speedy departure.

Humphrey pulled a decidedly long face when he heard of their change of plan; "though," as Avice remarked, "it only made two or three days' difference, after all, Miss Marchmont having all along intended leaving on the first."

"And to-morrow will be the twenty-eighth," added the girl by way of consolation.

"Are you really leaving to-morrow, then?" queried Humphrey anxiously. "So soon as that?"

They were standing by the little green gate, the afternoon sun glinting full upon them when he spoke, and in the soft light Avice looked more beautiful than ever. The thought of parting from her even for a short time was a painful one.

"Yes, really and truly to-morrow," she replied, absently pulling off the petals of the crimson rose at her belt.

Was it fancy, or was there really a sad inflection in the bright voice as she spoke? He could not say, but a sudden impulse made him ask hurriedly: "Are you sorry to go, Miss Sacharty? Would you have liked to have stayed?"

Something in his tone startled her, and she drew a step or two back through the little gate as she replied: "Sorry? Well, yes; I am sorry! It has all been so happy, and now it is at an end, and it can never come over again."

Humphrey looked at her in surprise. "What do you mean?" he inquired. "What is it that can never come over again?"

"Why, the summer," she returned, coloring slightly under his earnest gaze. "Of course there will be other summers, but then no two are quite alike—do you think so? I always feel that at the end of summer. A year will pass, you see, before the next—and a year is a long time."

Before Humphrey could reply, Miss Marchmont appeared in the doorway. "Come in, Avice, dear—I want your help," she said, nodding kindly to Humphrey. "We have a good deal to do, you know, and Perkins has got one of her bad headaches, and can do nothing."

Avice turned away, not sorry for the interruption. Humphrey had looked so strange, she thought, and had evidently not understood her remarks about the summer.

That was the last opportunity Humphrey had of a private talk with her; for, as Miss Marchmont had said, there was plenty to do, and the girl herself left early the next morning. "Good-bye!" she cried gaily, waving her hand to him as the train began to move. "I daresay I shall see you soon again!" And then, as the little trio on the platform faded out of sight, she sank back among the cushions of the carriage and prepared to enjoy her book. But somehow or other, its contents failed to interest her. The story—one which she had long wished to read, and which Humphrey had pushed into her hands as he bade her good-bye—seemed for the time to have lost its charm. The words made no sense. Two or three times she read over the same passage, and every time Humphrey's face seemed to come between her and the print, until at last she was fain to declare herself beaten, and shut it up with a bang which considerably startled the elderly lady who was seated in the opposite corner.

Strath Carron, where she was going, was a small place, but a good deal frequented just at that season by visitors, who were attracted partly by the mildness of its climate, and partly by the picturesqueness of its scenery, which was extremely grand and mountainous. Her friends, Major Douglas and his wife, had gone there chiefly on account of the mineral waters, for which the place was celebrated, and they were staying in an hotel near the Well.

"It is so much more convenient than staying in rooms," Mrs. Douglas explained as she led Avice up-stairs on her arrival. "One is saved all trouble and bother then."

She was a pretty, delicate, little woman, of about two or three and thirty, of an easy-going temperament, which made her anything but a strict chaperon, as Avice quickly found out. Indeed, her husband was much the best chaperon of the two, and had he been there all the time, it would have been better for Avice. But the day after her arrival he went off to Perthshire for some shooting, and the girl was left practically to her own devices.

She had been there about a week, or perhaps a little longer, when one morning coming in to lunch she noticed a fresh face at the long dining-table. The new-comer was a dark handsome man of about forty, clean shaven, and so dark in hue that she immediately decided that he must be, if not wholly coloured, at anyrate half-caste.

"Who is he, Mrs. Douglas, do you know?" she inquired, gazing curiously at the apparently unconscious stranger; but though Mrs. Douglas turned her gold-rimmed glasses full on the swarthy visage opposite, she could not say who or what he was. "We shall learn his name by-and-by," she returned carelessly; and Avice's curiosity remained for the time unsatisfied, and she dismissed him from her mind. Presently, however, she felt irresistibly impelled to look across the table at the stranger; and a curious undefinable uneasiness stole over her as she saw those keen black eyes fixed steadily upon her. She tried in vain to remove her eyes from his face. She looked at his neighbour, at the pot of heather which formed the central ornament of the table, and finally at her own plate; but wherever she looked, her glance seemed compelled to return to him. She gave a half-impatient shrug as she endeavoured to control her eyes, and a smile of satisfaction flitted momentarily over the dark face opposite. Lunch appeared that day an interminable affair, and Avice heaved a sigh of intense relief when at length it drew to a close and she followed Mrs. Douglas from the room.

"How oppressive it was in there!" she exclaimed as they reached their own room. And indeed all lunch-time she had felt as if she were being stifled.

Mrs. Douglas looked slightly astonished. "Hot, do you mean?" she inquired, drawing on a pair of dainty driving-gloves. "Why, my dear, *I* thought it quite cold. In fact, I made up my mind that a jacket would not be a bit too heavy driving this afternoon."

"No; I don't mean that it was hot," returned the girl. "I mean—well, I can't quite explain; but it felt very horrid." And she shivered slightly as she spoke, lying back in the easy-chair with evidently no intention of dressing.

Her friend was almost ready by this time. "Aren't you coming out?" she asked with some surprise. "We are going for a drive with Mrs. Barfelt, you know."

"Oh, to that place—what do you call it—that old castle near here? No; I don't think I'll come this afternoon. I've got rather a headache."

Mrs. Douglas looked quite distressed. "What a pity!" she cried. "Do change your mind, like a sensible girl, and come. You won't have the chance again, perhaps."

But though she could not herself tell why she refused an excursion to which she had long been looking forward, Avice declined the invitation persistently.

"I've got rather a headache," she repeated "and I should not enjoy it."

So her friend was obliged reluctantly to depart, leaving her ensconced on the sofa with a novel and a bottle of lavender water by her side.

But less than an hour after Mrs. Douglas had started she sallied forth, armed with the book and a rug, to a little glen at the back of the hotel. Why she chose that spot she could not have said, for it was not much frequented by the guests of the hotel, who usually scorned it on account of its neatness. Perhaps it was the cool green shadows of the glen which tempted Avice there that afternoon, or perhaps it was the tinkling music of the little burn which ran through it, and by the side of which she established herself, raising her eyes every now and then from her book to gaze into the clear depths of a pool in which were mirrored a thousand varying tints from the autumn trees above.

The time slipped slowly by, the silence unbroken save by the calls of the birds, the murmur of the brook, or the occasional rustle of some rabbit in the bushes, when all of a sudden, and without the slightest warning, she felt the same odd feeling of mental oppression which had so distressed her at lunch. Glancing up quickly, she saw the tall lithe form of the stranger standing before her.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

How it Feels to be in Battle.

As one who served through the terrible hardships and battles of the Crimea, 1854 and 1855, perhaps I am entitled to say a few words on this subject. I can truly say, for my own part, that I was a stranger to fear when in the heat of battle. The only timidity and serious thoughts that I felt was when taking what little repose we could get on the damp ground. Then the mind turned upon the possible results of next day's fighting, and a prayer went up to God for safety. But when once engaged in combat with the foe, every vestige of timidity disappeared like magic. In fact, it is hard to define one's feelings when engaged. One seems to think of nothing whatever but dealing as much destruction as possible among the enemy. My feelings were something like those of men in a pugilistic encounter—of which I once had a trial previous to the Crimea.

That Was the Intention.

An Irishman, lately landed, was taken to see the cathedral. As he entered the magnificent building, bewildered by its beauty, he turned to his companion and said:

"Pwhy, Pat, this bates the divil."

"That's the intintion, Moike," was the reply.

Inspecting the Protrait.

Maud—Well, mamma, how do you like it? Does it look like me?

Mamma—Humph! The face is good enough, but no one would ever think that dress cost your dear papa $3,000.

A Little Girl's Prayer.

A little girl in Connecticut was taken by her mother to a dentist, who removed a tooth. That night at prayers she said: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our dentists."

TIT-BITS.

Young but Observant.

Bulfinch—"And so Aunt Edith took you with her up into the choir, did she, Johnnie?"

Johnnie (who has some difficulty with his g's)—"Yes, I sat up all amon' the sin'ers."

Sticking up for His Horse.

"Your horse didn't win first money, as you said he would."

"No, but did you ever see an animal lose a race so magnificently?"

A Demonstration.

"Single blessedness," said Bruning,
With his solitude communing,
"Cannot yield us, that is plain,
Half the sweet content and pleasure
That doth, in such bounteous measure,
Unto double life obtain."

Then he "set his cap," and wooing
Won a maid, whose love's accruing
Would, he thought, his moments bless;
When a year they had been mated
Twins appeared and demonstrated
Sweets of double blessedness.

Some Satisfaction.

At the seaside.

Gertrude—"What shall we do, girls? There hasn't been a man in sight for two weeks."

Emily—"Let's go down to the shore once more and look at the buoys."

Doing Him Justice.

Irate Father—"There's one thing that's wonderful about you."

Dudeson—"Aw! What's that?"

Irate Father—"That a spongy head like yours doesn't absorb anything."

No Brain Trouble.

Anxious Parent—"Doctor, he doesn't do a thing except mope around, smoke cigarettes and chew gum. Is it his brain that's affected?"

Doctor—"No madam. The trouble is in his head."

McCue's New Hat.

Mrs. McCue—"Well, Con, are yez goin' ter chooreh wid me this marnin'?"

Mr. McCue—"I am; yis."

Mrs. McCue—"Well, yez can shtay to home if yez intend to wear that Nellie Bly hat, so you will. Oi'll not hov' the Duffeys on the nixt block askin' me who's the jude Oi hov' wid me. It's bod enough to wear Monte Cristo whuskers on yer face, so ith s!"

A Description.

Maud—What's a kiss like, Ethel?

Ethel—Oh, it don't feel much like anythirg; but it has an odor that is a combination of brilliantine, brandy, and cigarettes.

Retrieving the Past.

When Mabel was discreet sixteen,
She was so prim and so sedate,
She was so dignified of mien,
So calm, unruffled and serene,
You would have thought her thirty-eight.

But now that Mabel's thirty-eight,
Oh, what a difference is seen;
She's struck now such a giddy gait,
And goes it at so brisk a rate,
You'd surely take her for sixteen!

Docked for Lost Time.

Mrs. McCarthy—"Yer wages is twinty cints short this wake, Moike."

Mr. McCarthy—"Yis, Mary Ann. We had an explosion on Toosday an' th' foorman docked me fer the toime Oi wuz in th' air."

Sir John's Memory For Faces.

Once he and a friend were walking together, when a working man stepped before them. Sir John, after shaking hands, said: "Well, D——, it is 16 years since I met you. By the way, how is your boy?" The man agreed as to the time, and said his boy was better. After they parted and went on, the friend said to Sir John, "Of course that was a chance hit." "No," said he, "I remember when I met him once before he was in great distress about his little boy, who was suffering from a lame back." To the same friend Sir John said he might forget one face in a thousand but scarcely more.—{Biggar's Anecdotal Life of Sir John.

Too Poor to Take His Wife Along With Him.

"Some years ago, while looking at the clock at Strasburg," said Mr. Depew, "I noticed a large party of American tourists making the rounds of that celebrated ancient city. I was told by one of them that while most of the visitors hugely enjoyed the trip there was, by way of contrast, one among them whom nothing wonderful in nature and art could touch.

"The landscape had no charms for him; the Alps did not impress him; the beauties of Paris and Vienna did not evoke his ecstacies. Nothing that he saw had the slightest effect of drawing out the least expression of admiration. Weeks and weeks passed and the party were dumfounded at his lack of appreciation of the sights which met them on all sides.

"Finally it was decided to send a committee of four, two gentlemen and two ladies, to his room and inquire what it was prevented his enjoyment of the trip.

"'Old man,' said one of the committee, 'tell us what is the matter. If any one in the party has displeased you we will dismiss him, if any wrong has been done you we shall see that it is remedied, but do tell us what the trouble is, for we are trying hard to please you.'

"'Well,' said the unappreciative tourist, 'I do not care to say anything about my trouble. I wanted to keep it to myself, but as you have asked me I may as well out with it. The matter is just this: This is my wedding trip—the first wedding trip I ever made—and I'm so blamed poor that I did not have money enough to take my wife with me!'"