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CHAPTER III.

The day succeeding Katy Lennox's return to Silverton was rainy and cold for the season, the storm extending as far westward as the city of New York, and making Wilford Cameron shiver as he stepped from the Hudson River cars into the carriage waiting for him, first greeting pleasantly the white-gloved driver, who closing the carriage door, mounted to his seat and drove his handsome boys in the direction of No. 5 Fifth Avenue. And Wilford, leaning back among the cushions, thought how pleasant it was to be home again, feeling glad, as he frequently did, that the home was in every particular unexceptionable. The Camerons, he knew, were an old and highly respectable family, while it was his mother's pride that, go back as far as one might, on either side there could not be found a single blemish, or a member of whom to be ashamed. On the Cameron side there were millionaires, merchant princes, bankers, and stockholders, professors and scholars, while on her's, the Rosier side, there were LL.D.'s and D.D.'s, lawyers and clergymen, authors and artists, beauties and belles, the whole forming an illustrious line of ancestry, admirably represented and sustained by the present family of Camerons, occupying the brownstone front, corner of—Street and Fifth Avenue, where the handsome carriage stopped and a tall figure ran quickly up the marble steps. There was a soft rustle of silk, a delicate odor of perfume, and from the luxurious chair before the fire kindled in the grate, a lady rose and advanced a step or two towards the parlor door. In another moment she was kissing the young man bending over her and saluting her as a mother, kissing him quietly, properly, as the Cameron's always kissed, home again; for he was her favorite. She was very glad to have Wilford child, and brushing the rain drops from his coat, she led him to the fire, offering him her own easy-chair, and starting herself in quest of another. But Wilford held her back, and making her sit down, he drew an ottoman beside her, and then asked her first how she had been then where his sisters were and if his father had come home—for there was a father, a quiet, unassuming man, who stayed all day in Wall Street, seldom coming home in time

to carve at his own dinner table, and when he was at home, asking for nothing except to be left by his fashionable wife and daughter to himself, free to smoke and doze over his evening paper in the seclusion of his own reading-room. As Wilford's question concerning his sire had been the last one asked, so it was the last one answered, his mother parting his dark hair with her jeweled hand, and telling him first that, with the exception of a cold taken at the Park on Saturday afternoon, she was in usual health—second, that Juno was spending a few days in Orange, and that Bell had gone to pass the night with her particular friend, Mrs. Meredith, the most bookish woman in New York.

"Your father," the lady added, "has not yet returned, but as the dinner is ready I think we will not wait."

She touched a silver bell beside her, and ordering dinner to be sent up at once, went on to ask her son concerning his journey, and the people he had met, but Wilford, though intending to tell her all, would wait till after dinner. So, offering her his arm, he led her out to where the table was spread, widely different from the table prepared for Katy Lennox among the Silverton hills, for where at the farm-houses there had only been the homely wares common to the country, with Aunt Betsy's onions served in a bowl, there was here the finest of damask, the choicest of china, the costliest of cut-glass and the heaviest of silver, with the well-trained waiter gliding in and out, himself the very personification of strict table etiquette, such as the Barlows had never dreamed about. There was no fricasseed chicken here, or flaky crust, with pickled beans and apple-sauce; no custard pie with strawberries; and rich, sweet cream, poured from a blue earthen pitcher; but there were soups and fish, and roasted meats, and dishes with French names and taste, and dessert elaborately gotten up, and served with the utmost precision, and Mrs. Cameron presided over all with lady-like decorum, her soft, glossy silk of brown, with her rich lace and diamond pin in perfect keeping with herself and her surroundings. And opposite to her Wilford sat, a tall, dark, handsome man, of thirty or thereabouts—a man, whose polished manners, betokened at once a perfect knowledge of the world, and whose face, to a close observer, indicated how little satisfaction he had as yet found in the world. He had tried its pleasures, drinking the cup of freedom and happiness to its very dregs, and though he thought he liked it, he often found himself dissatisfied and reaching after something which should make life more real, more worth the living for. He had traveled all over Europe twice, had visited every spot worth visiting in his own country, had been a frequentee of every fashionable resort in New York, from the skating-pond to the theatres, had been admitted as a lawyer, had opened an office on Broadway, acquiring some reputation in his pro-

that, he thought, as Katy's fingers flew over the keys, executing a brilliant and difficult piece without a single mistake, and receiving the applause of the spectators easily, naturally, as if it were an everyday occurrence. But when by request she sang "Comin' through the Rye," Wilford's heart, if he had any before, was wholly gone, and he dreamed of Katy Lennox that night, wondering all the ensuing day how his haughty mother would receive the young school girl as a daughter, wife of the son whose bride she fancied, must be equal to the first lady in the land. And if Katy were not now equal she could be made so, Wilford thought, wondering if Canandaigua were the best place for her, and if she would consent to receive a year or two years' tuition from him, provided her family were poor. He did not know as they were, but he would ask, and he did, feeling a pang of regret when he heard to some extent how Katy was circumstanced. Mrs. Woodhull had never been to Silverton, and so she did not know of Uncle Ephraim and his old-fashioned sister; but she knew they were poor, that some relation had sent her to school; and she frankly told Wilford so, adding as she detected the shadow on his face, that one could not expect everything, and that a girl like Katy was not to be found every day. Wilford admitted all that, growing more and more infatuated, until at last, he consented to join the traveling party provided Katy joined it too, and when on the morning of their departure for the Falls he seated himself beside her in the car, he could not well have been happier, unless she had really been his wife, and he so much wished she was.

It was a most delightful trip, and Wilford was better satisfied with himself than he had ever been before in years. His past life was not all free from error, and he had many sad memories haunting him, but with Katy at his side, seeing what he saw, admiring what he admired, and doing what he bade her do, he gave the by-gones to wind, feeling only an intense desire to clasp the girl in his arms, and bear her away to some spot where with her pure, fresh life all his own, he could begin the world anew, and retrieve the past which he lost. This was when he was with Katy. Away from her he could remember the difference in their position, and prudential motives began to make themselves heard. Never but once had he taken an important step without consulting his mother, and the trouble in which that had involved him, warned him to be more cautious another time. And this was why Katy came back to Silverton unannounced, leaving her heart with Wilford Cameron, who would first seek advice with his mother, ere committing himself by word. He had seen the white-haired man waiting for her when the train stopped at Silverton, but standing there as he did, with his silvery locks parted in the centre, and shading his honest, open face, Uncle Ephraim looked like some patriarch of old, rather than a man to be despised, and Wilford felt only respect for him until he saw Katy's arms wound so lovingly around his neck as she called him Uncle Eph. That sight grated harshly, and Wilford felt glad that he was not bound to her by any pledge. Very cautiously he looked after the couple, witnessing the meeting of Katy and old Whitely, and guessing rightly that the colored vehicle was the one sent to transport Katy home. He was very moody for the remainder of the route between Silverton and Albany, where he parted with his Canandaigua friends they going on to the westward while he stopped all night in Albany, where he had some business to transact for his father.

He was intending to tell his mother everything, except that he paid Katy's bills. He would rather tell that to himself, as it might show his mother's sense of propriety and make her think less of Katy; so a dinner was over, and they had returned to the parlor, he opened the subject by asking her to guess what took him off so suddenly with Mrs. Woodhull.

The mother did not know—unless—and a strange light gleamed in her eye, as she asked if it were some girl.

"Yes, mother, it was," and with any reservation Wilford frankly told the story of his interest in Katy Lennox.

He admitted that she was poor and unaccustomed to society, but he loved her more than words could express.

"Not as I loved Genevra," he said, and there came a look of intense pain into his eyes.

In Wilford's voice there was a tone warning the mother that opposition would only feed the flame, and so she offered none directly but heard him patiently to the end, and then quietly questioned him of Katy and her family, especially the last. What did he know of it? Was it one to detract from the Cameron line, kept untarnished so long? Were the relatives such as he never need blush to own even if they came there into their drawing rooms as they would come if Katy did?

Wilford thought of Uncle Ephraim as he had seen him upon the platform at Silverton, and could scarcely repress a smile as he pictured to himself his mother's consternation at beholding that man in her drawing room. But he did not mention the deacon, though he acknowledged that Katy's family friends were not exactly the Cameron style. But Katy was young; Katy could be easily moulded, and once away from her old associates his mother and sisters could make of her what they pleased.

"I understand, then, that if you marry her you do not marry the family," and there was an expression from which Katy would have shrunk, could she have seen it and understood its meaning.

"No, I do not marry the family," Wilford rejoined emphatically, but the expression of his face was different from his mother's, for where she thought only of herself, not hesitat-

ing to trample on all Katy's love of home and friends, Wilford remembered Katy, thinking how he would make amends for separating her wholly from her home as he surely meant to do if he should win her. "Did I tell you," he continued, "that her father was a judge? She must be well connected on that side. And now, what shall I do?" he asked playfully. "Shall I propose to Katy Lennox, or shall I try to forget her?"

"I should not do either," was Mrs. Cameron's reply, for she knew that trying to forget her was the surest way of keeping her in mind, and she dared not confess to him how determined she was that Katy Lennox should never be her daughter if she could prevent it.

"Let matters take their course for a while," she said, "and see how you feel after a little. We are going to Newport the first of August, and perhaps you may find somebody there infinitely superior to this Katy Lennox. That's your father's ring. He is earlier than usual to-night. I would not tell him yet, till you are more decided," and the lady went hastily out into the hall to meet her husband.

A moment more and the elder Cameron appeared—a short, square-built man, with a face seamed with lines of care and eyes much like Wilford's, save that the shaggy eyebrows gave them a different expression. He was very glad to see his son, though he merely shook his hand, asking what nonsense took him off around the Lakes with Mrs. Woodhull, and wondering if women were never happy unless they were chasing after fashion. The elder Cameron was evidently not of his wife's way of thinking, but she let him go on until he was through, and then, with the most unflinching suggestion that his dinner would be cold. He was accustomed to that and so he did not mind, but he hurried through his household duties she used to enjoy so much, were irksome to her, and she enjoyed nothing except going with Uncle Ephraim into the fields where she could sit alone while he worked near by, or to ride with Morris as she sometimes did when he made his round of calls. She was not as good as she used to be, she thought, and with a view of making herself better she took to teaching in Morris and Helen's Sunday School, greatly to the distress of Aunt Betsy, who groaned bitterly when both her nieces adopted the "Episcopal quirk," forsaking entirely the household Sunday after Sunday, her old-fashioned leghorn, with faded ribbon of green was seen, bending down in the humble worship which God so much approves. But teaching in Sunday School, taken by itself, could not make Katy better, and the old restlessness remained until the morning when, sitting on the grass beneath the apple-tree, she read that Wilford Cameron was coming; then everything was changed and Katy never forgot the brightness of that day when the robins sang so merrily above her head, and all nature seemed to sympathize with her joy. There was no shadow around her now, nothing but hopeful sunshine, and with a bounding step she sought out Helen to tell her the good news. Helen's first remark, however, was a chill upon her spirits.

CHAPTER IV

"Wilford Cameron coming here?"

What will he think of us, we are so unlike him?"

Wilford's letter had been delayed so that the morrow was the day appointed for his coming, and never was there a busier afternoon at the farm-house than the one which followed the receipt of the letter. Everything not spotlessly clean before was made so now, Aunt Betsy, in her petticoat and short gown, going down upon her knees to scrub the back door-sill, as if the city guest were expected to notice that. On Aunt Hannah and Mrs. Lennox devolved the duty of preparing for the wants of the inner man, while Helen and Katy bent their energies to beautifying their home and making the most of their plain furniture.

The "spare bed room," kept for company, was only large enough to admit the high-post bed, a single chair, and the old-fashioned wash-stand, with the hole in the top for the bowl, and a drawer beneath for towels; and the two girls held a consultation as to whether it would not be better to disperse with the parlor altogether, and give that room to their visitor. But this was vetoed by Aunt Betsy, who, having finished the back door-sill, had now come round to the front, and with her scrubbing brush in one hand and her saucer of sand in the other, held forth upon the foolishness of the girls.

"Of course, if they had a beau, they'd want a t'other room, else where would they do their spunking?" that settled it. The parlor must remain as it was, Katy said, and Aunt Betsy went on with her account, while Helen and Katy consulted together how to make the huge feather-bed more like the mattresses to which Wilford must be accustomed. Helen's mind being the more suggestive, solved the problem first, and a large comfortable was brought from the box in the garret and folded carefully over the bed, which, thus hardened and flattened, "seemed like a mattress," Katy said, for she tried it, feeling quite well satisfied with the room when it was finished.

"It was certainly it bright carpeting upon the floor, its vase of flowers upon the stand, and its white-fringed window."

"I'd like to sleep here myself," was Katy's comment, while Helen offered no opinion, but followed her sister into the yard, where they were to sweep the grass and prune the early September flowers.

This afforded Aunt Betsy a chance to reconnoitre and criticise, which last she did unsparingly.

"What have them children been doin' to that bed? Put on a quilt, as I'm alive! It would break my back to lie there, and this Carmo is none of the youngest, accordin' to their tell; nigh onto thirty, if not turned. I am glad I know better than to treat visitors that way. The comforter may stay, but I'll be bound 'I'll make it softer!" And stealing up the stairs, Aunt Betsy brought down a second feather-bed, much lighter than the one already on, but still large enough to suggest, in the thought of smothering. This she had made herself, intending it as a part of Katy's "setting out," should she ever marry; and as things now seemed tending that way, it was only right, she thought, that Mr. Cameron, as she called him, should bring to have the benefit of it. Accordingly two beds, instead of one, were placed beneath the comfortable which Aunt Betsy permitted to remain.

"I'm mighty feared they'll find me out," she said, taking great pains in the making of her bed, and succeeding so well that when her task was done there was no perceptible difference between Helen's bed and her own except that the latter was a few inches higher than the former, and more nearly resembled a pin cushion in shape.

There was but little chance for Aunt Betsy to be detected, for Helen, supposing the room to be in order, had dismissed it from her mind, and was training a rose over a frame, while Katy was on her way to Linwood in quest of various little things which Mrs. Lennox considered indispensable to the entertainment of a man like Wilford Cameron. Morris was out on his piazza, enjoying the fine prospect he had of the sun shining across the pond, on the Silverton hill, and just gilding the top of the little church nestled in the valley. At sight of Katy he rose and greeted her with the kind, brotherly manner now habitual with him, for he had learned to listen quite calmly while Katy talked of fairy footsteps trod. Morris did not fully know that he was hugging this fond dream until he felt the keen pang which cut like a dissection's knife as Katy, turning her bright, eager face up to him whispered softly: "He's coming to-morrow—surely; I have his letter to tell me so."

Morris could not see the sunshine upon the distant hills, although it lay there just as purple and warm as it had a moment before. There was an instant of darkness, in which the hills, the pond, the sun setting, and Katy seemed a great way off to Morris, trying so hard to be calm, and mentally asking for help to do so. But Katy's hat, which she swung in her hand, had become entangled in the vines encircling one of the pillars of the piazza, and so she did not notice him until all traces of his agitation were past, and he could talk with her concerning Wilford; then playfully lifting her basket he asked what she had come to get.

This was not the first time the great house had rendered a like service to the little house, and so Katy did not blush when she explained that her mother wanted 30 pins, forks, and salt-cellars, and oil-soons, and would he be kind enough to bring the caster over himself, and come to dinner to-morrow at two o'clock, and would he go for Mr. Cameron? The forks, and salt-cellars, and spoons, and caster were cheerfully promised, while Morris consented to go for the guest; and then Katy came to the rest of her errand, the part distasteful to her, inasmuch as it concerned Uncle Ephraim—honest, unsophisticated Uncle Ephraim, who would come to the table in his shirt sleeves! This was the burden of her grief—the one thing she dreaded most, because she knew how such an act was looked upon by Mr. Cameron, who never having lived in the country a day in his life, except as he was either guest or traveler, could not make due allowance for these little departures from refinement, so obnoxious to people of his training.

"What is it, Katy?" Morris asked, as he saw how she hesitated, and guessed her errand was not all told.

"I hope you will not think me foolish or wicked," Katy began, her eyes filling with tears, as she felt that she might be doing Uncle Ephraim a wrong by admitting that in any way he could be improved. "I certainly love Uncle Ephraim dearly, and I do not mind his ways, but—Mr. Cameron may—that is, oh, Cousin Morris, did you ever notice how Uncle Ephraim will persist in coming to the table in his shirt sleeves?"

"Persist in hardly the word to use," Morris replied, smiling comically, as he readily understood Katy's misgivings. "Persist would imply his having been often remonstrated with for that breach of etiquette; whereas I doubt whether the idea that it was not in strict accordance with politeness was ever suggested to him."

"May be not," Katy answered. "It was never necessary till now, and I feel so disturbed, for I want Mr. Cameron to like him, and if he does that I am sure he won't."

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